

563 constitution (about which they asked many questions) was a
622 democratic one; for, they said, the Administration always supported the chiefs against the commoners.

• 621 The villages to which commoner leaders are appointed differ from all other Bantu villages of which we have knowledge in that they consist of groups of age-mates, not groups of kinsmen; boys build with contemporaries and remain with them through life; girls join the villages of their husbands at marriage; therefore relatives, other than husband and wife and young children, do not live together. Nevertheless kinship ties are important, for property circulates within the kinship group rather than within the village, and kinsmen are believed to be mystically interdependent, in a way in which fellow villagers are not. The most prized possession of the Nyakyusa are cattle, for cattle enable a man to marry, to live in comfort, to gain prestige by feasting his friends; and cattle pass along the roads of kinship. They pass between brothers, and half-brothers, and the sons of brothers; between fathers and sons; and between affines. Kinsmen also participate in common rituals, praying to common ancestors, and seeking protection from mystical dangers which are thought to travel, like cattle, along the roads of kinship. Ever fearful lest a quarrel among them should bring misfortune on all, they strive to live in harmony.

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The range of kinship recognized varies somewhat with the status of the family concerned and the proximity and personalities of its members, but, generally speaking, economic and religious co-operation link the descendants of a common grandfather, and marriage between the descendants of a common great-grandfather is excluded. A legal marriage is effected by the passage of cattle from the groom's group to the bride's, and it is this passage which is said to create kinship (*ubukamu*), with the consequent mystical interdependence, between a man and his wife, and between the one partner in a marriage and the close kinsmen of the other. Polygyny is the ideal of every pagan, and it is made possible by the ten years' difference in the average marriage age of men and women. Girls are betrothed very young and finally join their husbands at puberty, while few pagan men marry under twenty-five. Inherited cattle are controlled by the older generation and polygyny is the prerogative of age. For property passes not directly from father to son, but from brother to brother,

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CHAPTER II

VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

● (62) 591 NYAKYUSA villages (*ifipanga*)¹ are formed by groups of boys or men, all roughly of the same age, together with the wives and young children of those who are married. Women belong to the villages of their husbands, young children to those of their fathers. Girls live at home until they are betrothed, after which they visit their future husbands periodically, and soon after puberty each joins her husband in his village. Boys, who marry later in life, leave home at about the age of ten or eleven and set up villages of their own.

a. *The genesis of the village*

857 231 Between the ages of about six and eleven boys sleep at their fathers' houses and herd their fathers' cattle. This is a full-time, if not a very arduous, occupation. The cattle are driven out about an hour or two after sunrise and return to be milked about 1 p.m.; after an hour they are again driven out and do not come back until sunset. The cattle of a group of neighbours, usually five to ten,² are herded together by their young sons; and so these boys spend all day together for several years of their lives. This group of boys is the germ of the future age-village; it is a community with a common activity in the herding of the cattle, with a leader and laws and customs of its own.³

591 561 857 When the boys reach the age of ten or eleven, two important changes usually take place in their lives. Firstly, they leave the herding of cows to their younger brothers, and themselves begin the business of hoeing the fields which will occupy them until they die; secondly, they no longer sleep in the houses of their fathers but join an age-village of boys. Nowadays the two changes usually, but not always, take place at the same time, and well before puberty.

¹ cf. Xhosa *intanga*, 'a company of persons or animals of equal age'.

² The herd group is smaller in young men's villages where few are cattle-owners, and a very rich man occasionally herds his cattle alone.

³ G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 51-3.

591 Before the establishment of peace by European authority, how-
231 ever, cattle were commonly herded by young men, armed, and
857 only the calves were entrusted to boys, who herded them near
the homesteads; therefore moving to a boys' village did not coin-
cide with the change of occupation. Even to-day it is not un-
common for some boys who have reached puberty to be found
herding cattle. One we knew herded his father's cattle although
he had reached puberty, because he had no younger brothers old
enough to take over, and there were only five or six boys in his
herd-group altogether. There are also cases where special circum-
stances put the age of moving later. In one age-village the boys
leave home a little later than usual because there are leopards
about and it is dangerous for small boys to walk from the village
of their fathers to that of the boys, after dark.

857 When a number of the sons of a village of married men have
342 reached the right age, their fathers give them a piece of land to
one side of the parent village on which to build. There they build
little huts of reeds for themselves, sufficiently well thatched to
keep out the heavy rain, and there they sleep (*vide* Plate II). The
building of the huts on this land begins in a playful manner,
before the boys move. While they are still herding cows and
sleeping at home they build miniature huts there in their spare
time, but do not sleep in them. When they move they build
slightly more substantial huts with better thatch. At the begin-
ning, when a group of boys starts a new village, or when boys join
one already formed, they do not all have huts for themselves:
two or three friends share a hut. But later, as they grow older,
each builds for himself.

857 Until he marries each boy hoes his father's fields in his father's
264 village and eats food cooked by his own mother at his father's
571 house, but he sleeps with his friends. Thus between the time
when he leaves home and his marriage each is a member of two
villages: economically he still belongs to that of his father;
socially to that of his own contemporaries. Though bachelors eat
at their parents' home, it is very rarely that they do not eat in the
company of their own friends. A bachelor does not simply go
home to eat by himself, but a group of bachelors, friends living
in the same boys' village, go round together eating at the house
of each one's mother in turn.

621 In an age-village of married men there are always several
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VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

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different herds of cattle; and it is not only those from the same group of herd-boys that set up a new village together, but all the sons of the age-village. Thus when a boy leaves the herd group he joins a larger community, including the friends of his own age who have herded cows with him, and many others as well. Every boys' village consists primarily of the sons of the member of an older village who originally gave the land for its building, but sons of other villages live there too. 621
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The village begins with perhaps a dozen boys, and their younger brothers join them, one by one; but after some years, when the senior members of the boys' village are between sixteen and eighteen years old, the younger ones begin to be refused admittance to the village: 'they are children.' The young ones then either begin a new age-village of their own, or else join a village which has already been started by the sons of a nearby men's village a little junior to that of their own fathers. If you inquire who are the members of such and such a boys' village you are always told that they are the sons of a particular village of men, but detailed investigation reveals the presence of some sons of other men's villages as well. Brothers, half-brothers and other relatives are sometimes members of the same village, but more often not; and if they do belong to the same village that is because they are near each other in age, and were born in the same village, not because they are kinsmen. 621
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The members of the older boys' village, which is now closed and no longer increases in numbers, begin to marry as they reach the age of about twenty-five. Getting married is often a gradual process; but it is not until he has his wife permanently with him that a young man can have fields of his own and eat the produce at his own place. The cultivation of land requires the co-operation of a man and woman, and cooking on any elaborate scale is a woman's business. As the young men marry their village expands. The site is not changed but the houses are built ever bigger and farther apart, and adjacent land is brought under cultivation. The boys' village with which we are best acquainted is in this transitional stage. It has fifty-three members altogether, the majority of whom are single; but some few are married, cultivate their own fields with their wives and eat food cooked by their wives in their own houses. Of those who are single some again are betrothed to girls who visit them from time to time, but each 582
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621 still cultivates his father's fields and eats at his father's home. In former days, we were told, the marriage age of men was even later than it is at present (*vide infra*, p. 80). 'Perhaps after twenty a boy would be betrothed, but to a young girl, and he would wait eight years before she grew up.'

857 From the time boys begin to herd they recognize one of their number as a leader. 'When we herd cows as boys', a friend told us, 'there is always one who is obeyed by his fellows whatever he says. No one chooses him, he gains his leadership and his prestige by bodily strength. For always, when we are boys together among the cows, we vie with one another and dispute about going to turn back straying cattle, or about fetching fire to cook the food we have brought with us. And so we start fighting, and we go on fighting until one of us beats all his fellows completely and so becomes the leader. And then it is he who sends others to turn back straying cattle, to fetch fire and to collect firewood. And he is greatly respected. He settles quarrels too. What we quarrel about most as boys is a particular insult: one says to another: "You are only a child, you are, I am your senior." This is always happening and then it is the part of the one who is leader to set those two on to fight. We all stand round and watch and the one who first cries is proved the child.'

622 Later, when the boys have built apart from their fathers, one of their number is often appointed by the headman of their fathers' village to settle disputes between them. Some boys' villages have no such appointed leader, but many of them do. Such appointments are, however, temporary. It is only when political authority is transferred to their generation that the young men's permanent leaders are chosen.

b. The 'coming out' ceremony

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643 Eight or ten years after the young men of the senior boys' village of the chiefdom have begun to marry, their fathers hand over the government of the country to them. This transfer of authority is effected in an elaborate ceremony called the 'coming out' (*ubusoka*).

The 'coming out' is a series of legal acts by which the country of an old chief and his village headman (*amafumu*) is, with certain reservations, handed over into the possession and control of his

VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

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two senior sons and their respective village headmen. These legal acts are accompanied by much pomp and ceremony. It is at once the initiation of all the youth of the chiefdom into public life, the constitution of two new political units and the proclamation of two new chiefs. It consists not only of a series of legal acts but of religious ritual as well, action being taken to increase the personal qualities appropriate in a chief and his village headmen by treatment with medicines.

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The 'coming out' comprises six main events: firstly, the public recognition of a number of age-villages of young men, and the selection of headmen to lead them; secondly, the magical treatment of young chiefs and headmen to make them dignified and powerful; thirdly, the public recognition of the two young chiefs; fourthly, a cattle raid; fifthly, the establishment of the young age-villages on adequate land; and sixthly, the marriage of the young chiefs.

When the eldest sons of his contemporaries reach the age of about thirty-three to thirty-five years the old chief is approached by his village headmen who say: 'The sons have grown up, let us make the "coming out" for them.' After a period of delay, for he is unwilling to relinquish his own honour and power, the old chief agrees, and the 'coming out' takes place. He fears lest he may fall ill from 'the breath of men' should he delay too long (*vide infra*, p. 134). His two heirs, together with all the boys and young men, whether married or single, who are sons of the old chief's contemporaries, are summoned to attend, according to their age-villages, at the old chief's principal house. When they arrive they wait there for several days, while the old village headmen discuss with their chief where to give the young men land, and whom they will select as headmen of the young villages. In many of the young village groups there are already leaders previously appointed by the village headmen of their fathers. If they have proved satisfactory their appointments are confirmed by the old village headmen; if not new ones are selected.

In selecting leaders of the young men's villages the old headmen look for men who are wealthy, who come from respected families, who have ability in judging cases, and are popular with their fellows; in the old days they looked also for courage and the ability to lead men in war. These qualities correspond to the village headman's functions. He should be hospitable to his

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622 neighbours, he judges their cases; he is their leader at ceremonies
157 and in the old days he led them to war also. He represents their
desires to the chief, and it is through him, and in consultation
with him, that the chief gives orders. Besides this each headman
[754] (*ulifumu*) is believed to protect his own villagers from witchcraft,
'to watch over the country by night', to shield men and cattle
from the spiritual forces of evil.¹ To fit them for this task, village
headmen are treated with medicines at the 'coming out' to give
them the power of seeing and fighting witches.

622 So important is this position of village headman that legal pre-
cautions are taken 'to prevent the village headman becoming a
chief', as several informants have put it to us. It is illegal to
choose a village headman from among the kinsmen of a chief, and
it is illegal to elect the son of a village headman to that office in
any age-village of his own contemporaries, though he may per-
haps inherit the position in his father's village when his father
dies.

622 To return to the 'coming out' ceremony: when the old men
621 have made up their minds, one of them goes among the crowd of
young men, and catches hold of those they have chosen in order
of seniority: first the one who is to be leader of the senior
village of the first son of the old chief, then the leader of the
senior village of his second son, then the leader of the next senior
village of the first son, and so on. There are commonly eight age-
villages of young men; of these four will belong to the chiefdom
of the first son, four to that of the second. The eight new village
headmen are now publicly known, four in each new chiefdom.

622 The young chiefs, together with the senior headman of each,
789 are then treated with medicines that they may be impressive
643 (*nsisya*). From birth a chief undergoes periodical treatment to
make him impressive (*nsisya*) 'that we commoners may tremble
before him'. The treatment at the 'coming out' is directed
towards the same end: 'We treat him, then he will be altogether a
chief, men will respect him!' The village headmen now drink the

[192] ¹ The essential meaning of a word in one culture is often illuminated by the
meaning of a word from the same stem among neighbouring people. In this
connection it is significant that *ifumu* in Bemba and *mfumu* in Nyanja mean
'chief', but in Ankole *abafumu* means 'magicians' (including diviners) (*African
Political Systems*, p. 145), and among the Sukuma *bafumu* is used in the same
sense (*Africa*, Vol. XIX, p. 14). cf. H. H. Johnston, *A Comparative Study of
the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*, Vol. II, p. 270.

622 spear, and magic horn. In this way the new chiefs are shown to
643 their people.

622 Chiefs who are to be independent now separate, each moving
372 off with his men to the place where the senior age-village of that
chiefdom will eventually be built. All fire in the country is ex-
tinguished, even the fires in the homesteads of the old men, and
621 in each of the new independent chiefdoms new fire is made,
643 ceremonially, by the senior headman of the chiefdom and his
fellow next in rank. One holds a lion-bone while the other twirls
a medicated stick in a groove in the bone. The senior headman
and his second each gives fire to the village headman immediately
junior to him, and then the latter in turn to his immediate junior,
until each of the headmen has fire. At this point the future divi-
sion of each new chiefdom is foreshadowed, for the second senior
headman in each new chiefdom is recognized as the leader of one
side of the country. As each village headman lights his fire he
calls: 'Come men of such and such a village to me!' and they take
fire from him.

643 Since we are not primarily concerned with symbolism in this
372 book we shall not enter at length into the interpretation of these
773 events.¹ It must suffice to remind our readers of the Nyakyusa
myth that their chiefs came down from the Livingstone moun-
tains ten generations ago bringing fire with them, and that
they found the previous inhabitants of the valley, who became
their subjects, without fire, and eating their food raw. The ex-
tinguishing of the old fires and lighting of new is interpreted by
the Nyakyusa as a symbol of the new chieftainship. A chief with
whom we were well acquainted explained it thus: 'The fire is the
fire of lordship (*umoto botwa*). The old chieftainship is coming to
an end, the new has come. They extinguish the fires in all the
homes, those of the young men and those of the old men, then
they make new fire which is taken to every home. For formerly
Mwangamilo [the old chief] would have had little power [after
the 'coming out'], Mwakyusa and Reuben [his sons] would
have ruled.' But why fire? we asked. 'Because of old,' they relate,
we chiefs came with fire, the commoners had not yet got it, they
ate raw food only. When we came we slept in men's houses and
we made fire and cooked food. Men were astonished, and said:

¹ A full analysis of the symbolism of one ritual necessitates a comparison of all
the rituals of the society, which will be made in another book.

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"Ha! what's this?" They were burned; so they said: "These are chiefs because they brought this fire." It is this they remember, even to-day. . . . And another informant explained: "The fire means (*kukuti*) that a new chief has come, he brings fire, we throw away the old fire in the house." 643
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Having lighted their fires the young men cut bamboos and build temporary shelters for themselves, making one or more huts according to their numbers. It is forbidden for them to sleep in old huts, nor may they build on the site on which they lived as boys. Usually their first huts are on what was formerly pasture land, and later their fathers move aside to make room for the new generation. On the new site the two senior headmen of the new chief, together with a doctor, plant with magical ritual two branches of a *figus* (known in Nyakyusa as *iliyabe*)—a species which is important economically since the bark of saplings provides the traditional dress of Nyakyusa women. These trees, known as *ulupando* and *umpandapanda*, are planted where the future boundary will run between the two halves of the young chief's country, and the senior headman (who is leader of the senior half of the country) builds his house near where the *ulupando* has been planted. He and his colleague, together with the doctor, proceed, after planting the trees, to set up the hearth-stones of his hut. Again magic is performed. Nyakyusa informants were not agreed as to the symbolism of these trees, as they were about the symbolism of the new fire. The root *ukupanda* means to plant a crop, or to set up, or establish the hearth-stones of a house; it is used also for establishing, or treating, with medicines. Some informants interpreted the *ulupando* as the chief and *umpandapanda* as his wife, saying: "We are planting the chief and his wife." Others said that the two trees represented the two senior headmen of the country, another that they represented the chief's two senior wives. What is certain is that *ulupando* is regarded as more important than *umpandapanda* and that both are taboo. No one may cut the trees. If anyone breaks the taboo it is believed that lions and leopards (closely associated with chiefs) will roar at night, and treatment by a doctor will be necessary to still them. It is also widely believed that the strength of the chief is associated with the growth of the trees. "If these trees go dry the reign will not be successful, the chief will be defeated in war. If they flourish and grow the reign will be successful, the chief is 342
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[764] a ruler.' It is relevant to add that cuttings of this tree strike easily in the soil and climate of Nyakyusa country. When a chief dies he is buried beside his trees, and gradually a thicket—a sacred grove—forms round them.

The young men spend much time feasting and dancing. Formerly not only did they raid cattle for food from neighbouring chiefdoms, but they also took cattle, milk, and bananas from their fathers' villages. And they still do the latter, for they say: 'We are now the owners of the country.' The milk and bananas are often sent by the old chief, but 'if the chief is stingy, they teach him a lesson by going and *taking* bananas, saying: "We are important people."' Great emphasis is laid on this right of the young men to take food: one group, the mates of the first heir of a senior chief, boasted to us: 'We came out with grandeur, we ate many men's cattle.'

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621 After a month or two the members of each new village move off to build on a site of their own, and the wives of those who are married join them. Wives do not come to the first temporary shelters. The senior of the new villages remains on the site of the temporary shelters where fire was made, the ritual trees planted, and the hearth-stones of the senior headman established with magic. Gradually each member builds himself a permanent hut.

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561 The old men move aside to make room for their sons. If land is short they may move on to the site on which a boys' village formerly was, or there may be other land available. Whatever the position, adequate land must be provided for the young men's villages. And, we were told, 'We old men are glad to move, we are glad our sons are so many and we leave the land to them.' Or again: 'The old men move because new fire has come; the young men have made themselves into new people, hence they cannot build on their old sites but on new ones. Perhaps the old men will succeed them, for they may build in the boys' village where their sons were, or if there is space they go elsewhere. But the old men rejoice greatly, for their sons have "come out".' Nevertheless there are sometimes disputes between villages of different generations regarding a particular site (*vide* Document, p. 188).

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585 A few months after the 'coming out' each of the two young chiefs marries two wives. A young chief may be married already; but the two whom he now takes rank as his great wives (*abehe*

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the establishment of the mother of an heir in each, the future division of the country is foreshadowed. Finally, it is the occasion on which power is formally handed over to the younger generation, and the success of the new headmen as war leaders is put to the test.

c. Relations between villages within one chiefdom

Within each chiefdom, then, there are two sides, each under a senior headman. On each side are two or more age-villages of contemporaries of the chief—men of the ruling generation. Attached to these villages are boys' villages made up of the younger brothers and sons of contemporaries of the chief. They live separately from their fathers and may have their own village leaders, but legally each boys' village is subject to the authority of the headman of its parent village. On each side there are also two or more villages of old men, contemporaries of the chief's father, whose headmen have ritual functions. Each village established at a 'coming out' ceremony has considerable autonomy under its own headman, but it is subject to the senior headman of the side it belongs to in two ways: cases not settled by a village headman go to the senior headman of the side, and a senior headman leads the villages of his side in war and communal hunts. Even villages of old men are subject to the authority of the senior headman of the ruling generation on the side of the country where they live. Boys and young men of the generation which had not yet 'come out' used to fight and hunt as village groups under the leadership of the senior headman (of their fathers' generation) on the side of the country to which they belonged. Whether or not each boys' village was also subject in war and chase, as in legal disputes, to the authority of the headman of its parent village is not clear. Certainly each boys' village formed a defined segment within any larger group.

To recapitulate, there are always villages of three generations in existence—those of contemporaries of the late chief, the headmen of which have ritual functions; those of mature men, contemporaries of the ruling chief, whose headmen have administrative and military functions; and those of boys and young men, contemporaries of the heir, who have not yet 'come out', and who fight under the leadership of their fathers' senior headman.

[631] Sometimes, as we shall see presently, villages of a fourth generation exist also.

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Each age-grade, or generation, covers a span of 30 to 35 years, and each village comprises an age-set with a span of 5 to 8 years, though this is longer in sub-chiefdoms (*vide infra*, p. 37). The average age of members in each grade varies with the date of the last 'coming out' ceremony. Just before the ceremony the elders with ritual functions are those over 65 or 70; the mature men of the ruling generation those between 35 and 65; and the 'boys' who have not yet come out, those between 10 and 35. Just after the ceremony the ruling generation consists of those between about 10 and 35, anyone over 35 being an elder. Those just too young to participate in one 'coming out' may be just too old to participate in the next. The village of Katumba in Mwaipopo's country was in this position: it had been created after the 'coming out' of the young chief Mwankuga, but informants were uncertain whether or not it would be established as a separate village at the 'coming out' of his heir Mwanyilu (*vide* Document, p. 183).

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The two senior headmen of a new chiefdom are chosen from the two senior villages established at a 'coming out' ceremony, so that a commoner's chance of holding high office is greatest when he is just a little older than a chief's heirs. The senior village of one generation begets the senior villages of the next (*vide* Document, pp. 181-5). Thus, though the son of a village headman in one generation cannot become a village headman in the succeeding generation, there is a tendency for leadership within the chiefdom to pass from one *group* of men to their sons. Those who participate in a 'coming out' while very young tend to have least authority in the country, and are superseded when still under forty by the generation of their sons. The immediate contemporaries of a chief, i.e. those with whom he lives during boyhood, have a special bond with him all through life; and it may sometimes happen that when a chief dies young and is replaced by a brother (his own son being too young to inherit) a junior village comes into prominence because its members have been 'the companions' of the new chief. Bulindanajo in Mwaipopo's country was a village of this kind: Mwaipopo I had died young, and was succeeded by his brother Mwaipopo II ('Mwambene') who had 'come out' as a youth in Bulindanajo; and his immediate contemporaries from that village maintained a special bond with him.

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Theoretically the territorial arrangement is one in which the villages of the ruling generation lie at the centre of the country, each surrounded by satellite villages of their sons, while smaller villages of old men lie on the boundaries. In practice—at least nowadays—the pattern is more complex, with old men's villages squeezed in between those of the ruling generation. From the time of its establishment as a separate chiefdom at the 'coming out', the future division of the country is adumbrated: there is a senior headman in each half of the country with villages subordinate to him, and the mother of an heir in each half. On the boundary between the halves stand the ritual trees, landmarks for all to see.

Age and locality coincide, while kinship cuts across local grouping, fathers and sons, and very often brothers, being in different villages. But kinsmen tend to be established in the same side of a country, and so to remain within one chiefdom. Kinship terms are extended in some measure to the villages of the chiefdom, which are classified as those of 'our fathers', 'our elder brothers', 'our young brothers', and 'our sons'. Women have no direct share in the age-organization: their membership of a village turns on their relationship to some man—father, husband, husband's heir—and the age-range of women within one village is very wide.

Villages vary considerably in size. Boys' villages, as we have seen, begin with a dozen members or less, and the villages of old men are often very small also; we knew one with only 10 households, another with 11. The villages of young and middle-aged men commonly vary between 20 and 50 households, with 30 as a fair average in the hills. In Mwaipopo's country there were 540 taxpayers on the roll and we recorded 19 established villages and 6 boys' villages.¹ Some members of the boys' villages, and some elderly men, were not on the tax-roll, so that the average was over 20 boys or men in each village. Villages in the plain are somewhat larger, averaging around 40 households.

Men's villages are usually subdivided into sections under the leadership of assistant headmen, appointed by the headman of the village. These assistants do not share in the 'coming out' cere-

¹ *Vide infra*, pp. 181 ff. The tax registers are no guide to the number of villages since in them several villages are commonly lumped together as one under a senior village headman.

● 621 money, and are clearly distinguished from those who do. Indeed
624 they may be appointed at a considerably later date. The qualities
looked for in them, however, are similar to those looked for in
the village headmen, namely, wisdom in dealing with men, generosity, wealth, and the respect of their neighbours. They are expected to settle disputes, to pass on the orders of their chief or village headman to the men under them, to entertain their neighbours, and 'to watch over the country by day and by night'. On the hot Lake-shore plain, where the cattle are brought in before noon to stand in the shade of the bananas and are protected from insects by the smoke of a fire specially kindled for the purpose, an assistant headman is called 'he of the heap of hot ashes' (*ugwa-kyemo*), implying that he is the leader of the group whose cattle are herded together. 'He of the heap of hot ashes' is responsible both for the cows and for their masters. 'If the cows give no milk he will call the ten friends and warn them that if there is a witch among them he will be driven away.' Again, the extent of an assistant headman's influence depends very largely on his personal popularity. 'The village headman chooses a man of wisdom and says: "Build here with your friends": he is there first, and, if he is charitable (*mololo*), more people will come.' Generally speaking the assistants are more important in the large villages of the plains than in the smaller villages of the hills.

621 The distinction between the sub-divisions of a village and two separate villages is theoretically quite clear for the villages of men, since each independent village has been formally established at a 'coming out' ceremony. But in practice the distinction is somewhat blurred; for large villages often split *after* the 'coming out' ceremony into sections which operate very much as independent villages. This became apparent when we analysed in detail the villages of Mwaipopo's chiefdom (*vide* Document pp. 181-5) and found, besides the nineteen established villages, five village-sections which were treated in many respects as independent villages. Boys' villages remain somewhat fluid until the 'coming out'; but those offshoots of a parent village which have been closed to younger brothers may be regarded as separate villages.

361 Boys build their huts close together and plant bananas round them (*vide* Plate II). Then, as they grow older and marry, they build larger huts and space them further apart; but the homestead

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361 of a married man is close to those of his neighbours, his banana grove probably adjoining theirs, while the main garden-lands of the whole group are all together at a distance (*vide* Plate III). Boundaries between age-villages are thus not always apparent to a stranger. A solid hundred acres or so of houses and bananas may turn out to consist of two or three villages, each with its own organization, and each having a block of garden-lands separate from the others.

If any question arises about the village a man belongs to, the points discussed are: where he has built and where he cultivates —i.e. to what village the land he uses belongs; with whom he herds his cows; and which village headman he goes to in case of a dispute. Membership of a village is therefore defined primarily in terms of economic co-operation and political allegiance.

d. Moving

621 The age-system is somewhat modified by men moving from one village to another. When a man dies his heir frequently comes and lives where the dead man was living, so becoming a member of his age-village. A man's heir is his full brother next to him in age, and only when all the full brothers of a family have died does the property pass to the eldest son of the eldest brother. The difference in the ages of a man and his heir is often, therefore, only a few years; but even if the difference be great, and the heir many years younger than his new neighbours, he is now treated as their contemporary. He sits with them at ceremonies and he shares their rights at any division of meat.

621 Were all heirs to remove to the homesteads of those who had died, the villages of old men would, of course, continue to exist indefinitely. In fact they do not. In Mwaipopo's chiefdom there remained only one small village of old men, the grandfathers of the generation which had last 'come out'. Other villages of this grandfathers' generation were remembered by name; the heirs of former members sometimes used the old name; but they did not live together as a group; they were members of other villages of their own generation. Even the heir of the headman of each old village, who acted as a priest, lived in some other village. It was said that these grandfathers' villages would disappear even in name when Mwaipopo, the father of the young chief died. No

621 villages of the great-grandfathers' generation survived, even ritually (*vide* Document, pp. 881-5).¹

166 Men also move from one village to another and they do not always join a village of their exact contemporaries. A stranger may come and be granted land in a village even though he is considerably older or younger than the bulk of its members. Such movement from one village to another is now very considerable: we estimated that at least 80 per cent of the married men have at some time or other moved from the chiefdom in which they first cultivated gardens of their own. There is also movement from village to village within a chiefdom.

[681] Everyone agreed that moving is not something new. In the past a convicted witch was expelled from his village, and sometimes from the chiefdom; thieves and adulterers were also expelled or fled to take refuge with another chief (*vide infra*, pp. 118-9). But it is probable that movement between villages has increased greatly since the imposition of European control. The main reason for moving nowadays is, as we have said, the fear of witchcraft. Subsidiary reasons are the desire to get suitable land for cultivating cash crops, the desire to be near some centre of employment (such as Tukuyu or Rungwe), and the desire to live with others of like mind, as fellow Christians or fellow pagans, fellow Moravians or fellow adherents of the 'Watch Tower' (*vide infra*, pp. 40-3).

166 Women move from one village to another even more often
591 than men, for, not only do wives move with their husbands, but
587 a girl commonly marries a man of a village other than that in which she grew up, and is later inherited by a kinsman of her dead husband who lives in yet another village. Since first wives are usually ten years younger than their husbands, and junior wives may be forty or fifty years younger, most women are inherited at least once during their lives, and some are inherited several times. The modern high divorce rate accelerates this long-established circulation of women from village to village.

¹ It is possible that the existence of villages of four generations was due to the fact that Mwaipopo continued to live long after the 'coming out' of his heir Mwankuga—a survival not usual in traditional practice (*vide supra*, p. 30).

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e. Variation in the basic form of village organization

The splitting of a chiefdom into two at the 'coming out', the division of each country into two sides, the establishment of two age-villages of men in each half, and the development of two boys' villages attached to each village of men: all this division and sub-division into two equal parts creates the basic form of Nyakyusa political organization. But there are frequent variations from it. Formerly, in large chiefdoms sometimes three or even four sons went through the 'coming-out' ceremony, each with his own village headmen, and each setting up an independent chiefdom. Very often, we were told, a chief would build a separate royal homestead (*ikitangalala*) for his favourite wife, and her son would 'come out' with his two senior brothers and inherit a small country subordinate to one of them. Again, the division of an old chief's country into two was not always accepted by the young men concerned; quarrels and fighting between them were common and the position established at the 'coming out' was sometimes modified by war. If one of the two decisively defeated the other, he took all his brother's cattle and reduced him to a subordinate position. The land of the Nyakyusa is full of such minor chiefdoms; by the clerks who collect tax they are described as 'villages', but they are radically different from villages in their constitution; for, while they often consist only of a few score families, they are themselves articulated into age-villages, and have at their head not an elected village headman (*ulifumu*) but a hereditary chief (*umalafyale*). A minor chief marries in the ordinary way, like a commoner, and only one of his sons inherits his chieftainship; while his chiefdom, owing to its small size, is often simply divided into two villages, one for the old, one for the young men.

There is no separate 'coming out' ceremony for a minor chiefdom but the heir goes through the ceremony with his superior, remaining with him during and after the fire-making ceremony. His mates form one village under their own headman, who is subordinate to one of the two senior headmen of the new independent chief, taking fire from him. Great emphasis is laid on the fact that no separate fire, kindled by friction, is lighted for a subordinate chief.

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salary to him. This reduces the second son to the position of a minor chief as effectively as a defeat in war might have done in the old days. But, while the action of warfare only occasionally led to the subordination of one of the brothers, this action of the Government does so invariably, and always subordinates the younger brother. When a senior chief dies, on the other hand, the salary is usually divided; the bulk of it goes to the first son, together with the position of senior chief, while the second son is given the salary of an ordinary chief.

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Nevertheless, whether the junior brother is to become a chief in receipt of a salary or not, he still goes through the 'coming out' ceremony with his brother, and is apportioned villages and headmen. Even in a country in which there are several minor chiefs there still is the division into two, some being regarded as subordinate to the senior heir, and the others to the junior. Division of a chiefdom into two at the 'coming out' is the basic form which is maintained, at least ceremonially, despite all modifications.

The introduction of Courts and salaries has brought a new element into the relationship between the old chief and his heirs. Only one of them can receive the salary and they commonly dispute about it. Quarrels are particularly frequent over the position of senior chief, for the presidency of a Court carries with it a relatively large salary. Old senior chiefs cling to the position long after their sons have 'come out'. There is no compulsory superannuation of chiefs, and the traditional mechanism for getting rid of an old chief when his sons were ready to take over—strangulation by his councillors—no longer operates. The old headmen remain in power along with the old chief. Thus one effect of British Administration in Nyakyusa country has been to maintain the older generation in power much longer than was traditionally usual, and to delay the assumption of full responsibility for government by the younger generation.

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Another modern change which has far-reaching effects is the omission in some chiefdoms of the 'coming out' ceremony. When there is no 'coming out' the old men do not move aside to make room for their sons, and consequently the territorial demarcation between villages of old and young becomes blurred. Among the neighbouring people of Ngonde the 'coming out' ceremony has been dropped. There boys still build apart from their fathers, and the villages of young and old are more or

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643 less separate, but as time goes on the demarcation between
177 them becomes less and less clear. In most chiefdoms of the
● 621 Nyakyusa the ceremony is still observed, but in the country of
Porokoto, near Rungwe mission, it has not been performed for a
generation, and there the territorial separation between young and
old is much less definite than in other chiefdoms. The mainten-
ance of the age-village system is ultimately dependent upon the
moving aside of the old men in each generation to make room for
their sons.

The reason commonly given for the omission of the ceremony
in Ngonde is that since the country has become more densely
populated there is no longer room for two chiefs to divide the
country of their father. The old system of division was adapted
to an expanding population in a relatively empty country; and
the two young chiefs ordinarily ruled a greater area, and more
men, than their father. Further, it is said, the ritual was in one
aspect a preparation for war, and fighting between chiefdoms has
ceased. These explanations are obviously not adequate, since the
ceremony is still performed in Nyakyusa chiefdoms in which
there is neither room for expansion, nor war. Its omission may
be related rather to the general abandoning of traditional rituals
in Ngonde. Forty-five per cent of the people of Ngonde, includ-
ing many leading men, are professing Christians, and there is a
very general scepticism of the efficacy of traditional rituals. This
scepticism extends even to those who are not Church members.

643 In Porokoto's chiefdom, the 'coming out' was omitted partly
197 because of a dispute over the succession; but there, also, many of
the traditional rituals are not regularly performed (as they are in
other parts of Nyakyusa country), because the proportion of Christ-
ians is high since Porokoto's chiefdom adjoins the main Moravian
mission station, Rungwe, and because pagan faith in these rituals
has therefore been shaken. As Porokoto (who is not a professing
Christian himself) put it, when explaining why he had not per-
formed the twin ritual for his own twin daughters: 'We see that
nothing happens to the Christians when they omit the rituals, so
we begin to say "What value have they?"' Thus not only are
Christians forbidden by their Churches to participate in the ritual
acts of the 'coming out' but pagans themselves begin to doubt
their necessity.

The presence of Christians further complicates the traditional

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village organization since many of them live in separate Christian villages, or sections of villages. When the first German missionaries arrived among the Nyakyusa in 1891, they bought land from the chiefs and village headmen at the different points at which they decided to settle, and villages of Christian converts have grown up on this land. The nucleus of these villages consisted of Ngonde workmen who came from Karonga (where a Scots mission was already established) to help the Germans build their mission houses. Later, local Nyakyusa who came to work at the mission stations built there too, and a party of ninety slaves, rescued by the German administration from the Arab leader, Mlozi, were given into the care of the missionaries and settled on the land they had bought. These slaves were from other tribes, not Nyakyusa, and there was difficulty in repatriating them to their home villages. The foreigners and Nyakyusa who remained on mission land were those who accepted Christian teaching. Practically all the early converts were already working for the missionaries and living near them before their baptism, and later converts were encouraged to move out of their pagan villages and join the new villages of Christians on mission land. On the other hand, any who left the Church, or who were suspended for practising polygyny or for some other cause, were, and still are, liable to be turned off mission land by the missionary in charge. Thus these villages comprise only professing Christians.

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In the villages on mission land there is a certain division of authority between Church and State. Up to 1914 such villages were treated as being outside the control of any chief. A Nyakyusa informant described the position thus: 'The missionaries said that they had bought their land and they would not admit any authority of the chief over it. They collected the taxes for the (German) Government themselves. The chief never sent into "European country" (*KiSungu*) for anything. The people there did not cook for him. The missionary used to be the chief in the European country; but since the English came it is different.' Under the system of Indirect Rule the administrative authority of chiefs over Africans living on mission-owned land is recognized; taxes are paid through the chief, and civil cases between Christians may be taken to the chief's court (*vide infra*, p. 138). But chiefs still treat Christians living on mission land rather differently from those living on land which has not been so allocated. They

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621 are, for example, chary of calling out Christians to carry loads when a Government official comes by wanting porters, or of sending their messengers into the mission villages when they require food for any purpose. The leaders of the villages on mission land are not headmen appointed at the 'coming out' (in which the Christian villages do not share), but 'elders' or 'peacemakers' appointed by the Church (usually the missionary and 'session'); and it is under such a leader that the members of a village on mission land rally when they are called out to co-operate in some activity, such as a pig-hunt, in which each village acts as a unit.

621 Even on mission land, however, the traditional village organization and age-grouping are in some measure maintained. Boys leave their fathers' houses well before they reach puberty and build together a little distance away. There they are joined by younger brothers until the village is closed and the youngsters are told to start a new village of their own. Where there is plenty of land, as at Itete mission in Selya, the division between the generations is still quite clear, but where good building sites are scarce, as on Rungwe mission land, the divisions are blurred. As we have seen, the maintenance of clear territorial divisions between the generations depends upon the old men moving aside and leaving the greater part of the land for the more numerous ruling generation. Such a movement never occurs on mission land, which is not part of the land of any chief. It follows that territorial separation of age groups cannot there continue for long.

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621 Many Nyakyusa Christians nowadays prefer not to live on mission land, on the ground that there is less security of tenure, and less opportunity to develop coffee planting, on mission land than off it (*vide infra*, p. 48). At the same time the Moravian and Berlin missions have ceased to press their early policy of gathering converts at mission stations,¹ so that more and more Christians are coming to live intermingled with pagan neighbours. Very often, however, Christians choose to gather in one section of a village: scholars who have decided to become Christians often get permission to build near their school; they choose to move out of the pagan villages in which they have been living in order to

¹ The Scots mission in Ngonde never sought to gather its converts into separate villages, recommending rather that Christians should remain in their own homes and influence their pagan neighbours.

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build with Christian contemporaries, and sometimes the teacher is himself quite a young man and builds with them. Members of two independent churches, the Watch Tower¹ and the followers of Ngemela, have also built apart with fellow believers. Each such group has its own name, and a sense of unity, and its religious leader is recognized as the leader in secular affairs also, but politically it is a section of a larger pagan village of contemporaries. We know of no case in which a purely Christian group living off mission land has been given status as a village at the 'coming out'.

Since the same word, *ikipanga*,² is used both for a village and its sub-divisions the distinction between village and village-section is often not clear in ordinary speech, but it is apparent at the 'coming out', and in legal procedure.

¹ The Watch Tower (Jehovah's Witnesses) is of course a world organization, but Nyakyusa followers were organized under their own leaders and so far as we could discover were subject to no outside supervision between 1935 and 1938.

² *Ikipanga* is also used sometimes for the following of a chief, and nowadays for a congregation or church; cf. the Xhosa *ibandla*.

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decided by the old village headmen and chief in consultation, at the commencement of the 'coming out' ceremony. This moving aside of the old men is an essential part of the ceremony and occurs even when there is unoccupied land available. For example, at the 'coming out' of Mwarukuga, Mwaipopo's heir, the old men moved aside to make room for their sons, although there is a large area of unoccupied land in the chiefdom, which is slowly being colonized by Mwaipopo's men. 423

Although the main redistribution is at the 'coming out', later readjustments are common enough. If a particular men's village attracts many members, and these members become wealthy in wives and children, then it may be necessary for the old men to move aside a second time, to make yet more room for their sons. The senior headman of the side of the chiefdom concerned, in consultation with the chief and other village headmen, has the power to make equitable adjustments in the land holdings of the villages of his side. We watched one village, whose numbers had diminished, being moved to make more room for a junior one which had flourished. But so long as its members remain together, a village retains its name and identity, though its site may be moved more than once. 'A village', the Nyakyusa say, 'consists in men, not in land.' 621 ● 423 [622]

Boundary disputes between villages of a chiefdom are not unusual. In the old days these often led to war. Nowadays they are taken before the Court, whence there is an appeal to the federal court, the District Officer, the Provincial Commissioner and thence to the High Court (cf. p. 137). One such case, which we observed, had dragged on for years because the chief concerned, who happened to be president of the Court, feared to give judgment lest he be bewitched by the village which lost the case (cf. Document p. 191). 691

The division of the land allotted to each village lies with the members of that village, under the leadership of their own headman. The village headman himself, and other prominent individuals in the group, get first choice of sites: a son does not have a prescriptive right to the building site and gardens of his father when the old men move aside for their sons. 'If you are prominent, and you like your father's old site, that's all right, the others agree; but if you are unimportant ("light"), no; one of the important men takes it; you have no power.' Certain building and garden 425 574

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[182] African churches which countenance polygyny. The difficulty is partially overcome in some well-to-do Christian families by hiring labour to work in their fields and to fetch water and wood, and by offering visitors coffee or tea, which are easily prepared, in place of home-brewed beer; nevertheless the conflict between the value of hospitality (to which pagan and Christian alike subscribe, though they define it rather differently) and the value of monogamy, is often acute.

• 621 The mutual obligations of neighbours are not confined to feeding one another, for neighbours share with relatives the obligation of giving sympathy and assistance at the various crises in Nyakyusa life; the concept of *ukwangala* includes keeping on good terms with people by being sympathetic and obliging.

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621 All the members of a village (except young children) are obliged to attend every burial of an adolescent or adult in that village; they go to mourn the death of a neighbour or condole with one who is burying a 'son', for if a man dies while his father (or father's full brother, or his own senior brother) is yet alive, he is often buried in his 'father's' homestead.¹ Where a youth or man is buried by his 'father', his fellow villagers must attend the funeral also, but boys and young men need not go to a funeral in their fathers' village unless it is a village-mate of their own who is being buried.

[754] Funerals are occasions for feasting and dancing, so the obligation 'to mourn one another' (*ukulelanela*) does not press hardy, and the Nyakyusa feeling is that no one would fail to come unless he were a witch, and fearful lest his victim rise from the grave and denounce him. 'If a man does not go to his neighbour's burial then at once people say: "It was you who bewitched him. Why else do you not come to bury him?"' Failure to come is certain evidence that the truant is 'a harsh man who does not keep on good terms with people (*nkali, atikwangala kanunu nabandu*)'.

764 One neighbour, 'he who went about most with the dead man', is appointed by the headman of the village to help the relatives dig the grave, and village neighbours must also bring small gifts of food and firewood for the entertainment of the many guests.

¹ A married man whose 'fathers' are dead, or do not choose to exercise their right to bury him, is buried at his own home, and a woman who has borne a child is buried at her husband's home.

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Food (other than meat) is provided on the day of the burial by the women of the home at which the burial takes place, on the succeeding day by visiting relatives, and on the third day by village neighbours. Women neighbours, like woman relatives, often bring gifts of bark-cloth belts (*amakiba*) with which to bind up the bellies of their bereaved friends, who are all atremble and full of fear, and so support them. These belts symbolize the sympathy of friends in the fearful grief of the mourners. 'If a woman wears many belts at a burial that means that she has many friends; her passionate grief is comforted by their friendship.'¹ And neighbours, like relatives and close friends from other chiefdoms, may bring cloths which are used to wrap the corpse and bind up the bellies of the chief mourners. But these gifts of food, firewood, belts, and cloth are the limit of a neighbour's obligations; very rarely does a neighbour bring a bull to kill for the funeral feast, whereas close kinsmen and affines are obliged to provide a bull or cow for this purpose if they have one. And neighbours take virtually no share in the elaborate ritual which follows for cleansing relatives from the contagion of death, driving the thought of the deceased out of their minds, and bringing back his spirit to bless the home. Their only part is to bring small gifts of millet from which to brew the beer drunk at the close of this ritual.

At an ordinary birth there is very little ceremony and the village as a group is not concerned, though close friends will help the mother during her confinement, fetching wood and water for her, and bringing occasional gifts of cooked food; but twin births are regarded as fearful and dangerous, and an elaborate ritual is performed to cleanse relatives from the contagion which, if left untreated, is believed to lead to serious swelling of the arms, legs, and stomachs, accompanied by diarrhoea. Relatives are treated with many medicines, while village neighbours are sprinkled with one only, but their cattle, especially the cattle herded with those of the man who has begotten twins, are thought to be in danger. At one twin ritual we watched there was some discussion whether all the cattle of the age-village should be treated, or only those of the herd-group to which the father of the twins belonged. Finally it was decided that on previous occasions all the cattle of the village had been treated, and a message was sent

¹ cf. Godfrey Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial', *Bantu Studies*, Vol. III (1939), p. 12.

845 to bring all the herds of the village for treatment. The father of
783 these twins explained that neighbours would suffer less than
● 621 relatives, if left untreated, but 'their legs would ache a little
[264] because we eat with them'. And here we come to an idea which
appears in many situations in Nyakyusa life, the idea that con-
tagion is spread through eating together. Relatives of parents of
twins are not thought to be in danger until they eat or drink with
one of the parents: the ritual is performed so that they may eat
together safely. Similarly a murderer and his relatives are thought
to be in magical danger from the relatives of the murdered man
only if they should eat or drink with them. So too, the bond
between neighbours which puts them in danger from the im-
purity of one of them is the sharing of food.

881 At the initiation and marriage of a girl, neighbours again assist
621 and identify themselves with the principals. When she reaches
puberty a girl is secluded, and her companions in the village—
the girls who are her immediate juniors, for the older ones will
have joined their husbands—keep her company. Some are her
own younger sisters and half-sisters, others are not related at all.
Should one girl of the village not join them she is not accused of
witchcraft, but it is unusual for one to stay away; to do so would
show 'pride' (*amatingo*). These companions (*abapanji*) sleep and
eat with the 'bride' (*unsungu*)¹ and share her tasks and lessons,
fetching firewood, making mats, learning songs, and listening to
the instruction of 'the mothers'. They and the 'bride' go about
together as a group and, accompanied by one or two 'mothers',
may visit a 'bride' and her maids in another village, the two
[572] groups competing in dancing and singing. So keen is the rivalry
that formerly, we were told, the visits sometimes led to fighting
between the maids and 'mothers' of each 'bride', particularly
when the competing groups came from different chiefdoms. At
[864] the end of the ritual two of the maids accompany the bride to her
husband's house, and spend a few days with her there, sharing
the attentions of her husband at night (*vide infra*, p. 87).

During her seclusion the bride avoids her father, whom she
refers to as 'father-in-law', and she avoids also all his contem-

¹ *Unsungu* means a girl who has reached puberty but has not yet borne a child. She is usually, though not invariably, betrothed, and her 'husband' has a part in the puberty ritual. There is no exact English translation, and we think that 'bride' is the least misleading in this context.

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poraries, the men of the village. They are forbidden to enter her hut, and if she catches sight of one outside she turns away from him and shields her face with a mat. And at the end of the seclusion each 'village father', as well as her own father, must make her a small gift, before she will greet him. The co-wives and some of the village neighbours of the bride's mother form the group of 'mothers' who treat and instruct the bride, help to provide food for the feasts, and finally take her to her husband. Not all the village neighbours are expected to cook for the marriage feasts of a commoner's daughter, only immediate neighbours and special friends (together with relatives) who have been asked to do so; but if an immediate neighbour is not invited to help he will feel affronted. Twijulege explained that 'If the owner of the homestead overlooks someone who has built close to him, and does not say to him, "They are coming to bring the marriage-cattle for your child, please help us to cook", then that friend will be angry, and will think to himself, "Perhaps we are not on good terms (*tutikwangala kanumu*) though I had always thought we were", and he will say to the father of the bride: "Why did you not tell me that they were coming to bring the marriage-cattle for your child that I might help you with the food? I was startled by the rejoicing." ' An old man who had only called one friend, besides relatives and the 'best man', to help cook at the marriage of his daughter, was stigmatized as 'a surly fellow who does not care about being on good terms with people'.

The groom, on his part, is supported by his village-mates, who come in a crowd driving the marriage-cattle, and dancing the stamping marriage dance (*ukukanya nganya*). His mother, who has a share in the ritual and brings gifts of food, follows him, accompanied by some of her co-wives and village neighbours.

Village solidarity is thus exhibited at ceremonies, not only in the allocation of food, but by the manner in which village contemporaries of the same sex rally to each other's help, dance together and, if need be, fight together.

Besides offering sympathy and help when their fellow is in need, it is the duty of neighbours to give him advice, and persuade him to act wisely. If, for example, a man has delayed very long in providing marriage-cattle for his son, his neighbours take the son's part, and try to persuade him to give the cattle. 'Perhaps', said one informant, 'the son may elope with a girl, and

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621 then if the father says his son has done wrong his neighbours
572 reply: "You have caused him to do wrong yourself. Did you
suppose him to be a boy that you did not provide marriage-cattle
for him?" Then the father becomes more ready to pay damages
for his son.' And again, 'If a young man finds that his father
objects to his marrying the girl he loves, he complains to his
father's neighbours (*pamafumu abapalamani ba gwise*). Then they
discuss the matter and say to the father: "Do you want him to
teach you a lesson by taking a chief's wife or daughter, for whom
many cattle must be given?" So the father agrees.'

768 Neighbours are concerned, too, to see a fair distribution of a
621 deceased fellow's estate, and the fulfilment of the heir's obligations
to his wards. 'It is not the relatives, but "the fathers of the
village" who watch over a young boy's interests when his father
is dead' (*vide infra*, p. 106). We listened to one discussion of a
[584] quarrel over inheritance which was believed to have led to kins-
men working sorcery against each other. At this discussion four
village neighbours of the sick man (thought to be suffering from
the sorcery of his father's brother's son), as well as ten relatives,
attended.

684 The father's neighbours are also asked to mediate when a son
593 has wronged his father and seeks forgiveness. For example,
621 Mwangobola's son had committed adultery with his father's
783 wife. He paid six head of cattle and then went off to the coast,
where he remained a long time. When he returned he brought
two cows and approached his father's neighbours, asking them
to take the cows to his father. When they took the cows his father
said: 'He must find a bull as well, and brew beer, because he is
my eldest son.' So he got a bull and brewed beer, and the father
also brewed. 'Then', said the old man who reported the case,
'the fathers of the village came together and the bull was killed
and they ate the meat and drank the beer. . . . Thus the son made
friends with his father.'

621 Here we have the ritual of reconciliation between relatives in
783 which neighbours of the senior must participate, for their anger
is held to be as dangerous to the junior as that of his senior rela-
tive. Informal giving of advice merges into the practice of arbitra-
tion, and of murmuring against a wrong-doer, and thus, it is
thought, causing him misfortune. These latter practices are dis-
cussed in ensuing chapters,

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her chair and sat on the floor. We said to Mwaipopo as he entered: 'There is a daughter-in-law here.' He said: 'That's all right, she is enjoying the company of Kagile (M.W.)', but he was obviously restive, and went outside as soon as food appeared. He said to G.W.: 'That's quite all right, let them go on enjoying each other's company. She (i.e. S—) does not avoid me because M— (a local missionary) brought her to me one day and I killed a bull for them, but let us stay outside now, for they would be ashamed to eat.' The women protested very much saying *they* would go out, but the chief would not agree. As soon as they had drunk their tea they hurried off, and crouching down with their backs towards the men they answered their farewell greetings.

In reply to queries as to why they insist that father-in-law and daughter-in-law avoid one another, the Nyakyusa relate a myth of incest between them: 'Long ago a chief's son married a very beautiful wife. The boy's father saw the girl and after one look desired her, for she was very beautiful, and he said: "She is fit to be a chief's wife (*umtwehe*)."' Men said this was a very bad thing and agreed that in future they would not look at their daughters-in-law. That is how avoidance began. It was for fear of fathers making love to their sons' wives.' This myth is related with some diffidence, and not everyone knows it, but it was told us, or referred to, repeatedly, and may be taken as current in the society. One informant, a very intelligent woman doctor, also associated seeing a father-in-law with seeing his sexual activities. 'We think that to see your husband's father is very rude, because it is as if you saw him sleeping with your husband's mother. You compare, you see, your husband's body and you see your husband's father's body. It is very bad.'

Age-villages are then associated with the feeling that fathers-in-law and daughters-in-law must be kept completely separate lest they should commit incest, and that adolescent youths should not have any glimpse of the sexual activities of their parents; but the separation of the generations is not complete, for marriage with the daughter of a village neighbour is approved, provided he is not an *immediate* neighbour. Mwakionde explained that in the old days people disliked marriage with the daughter of a next-door neighbour because she was 'like a daughter'—'the fathers ate *embalaga* (a dish made with bananas) together'—but marriage with the daughters of other village-mates was always approved.

CHAPTER V

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

a. *Witchcraft and 'the breath of men'*

IN the Nyakyusa view two of the main co-operative activities of a village are defence against witches, and the punishment of wrong-doers through sickness brought upon them by the murmuring of their fellows. Fellow villagers are 'members of one another' as much on account of this mystical interdependence as on account of their economic co-operation and enjoyment of each other's company. The village headmen are spoken of as the leaders in the 'war by night' against witches, as they are leaders in war by day, and it is they also who are foremost in bringing 'the breath of men' (*embepo sya bandu*) on a wrongdoer, so that his body becomes cold, and he falls ill. We must therefore examine the concept of witchcraft and of this 'breath of men' in order to understand village relationships.

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i. *The nature of witchcraft*

The Nyakyusa believe that certain people have pythons (*isota*) in their bellies which give them power to harm men and cattle, by throttling, tramping, wounding, and kicking them. These are the witches (*abalosi*). They are said to fly by night on their pythons, or 'on the wind', either singly or in covens, to attack a chosen victim, and to leave on their beds their skins, which 'can feel nothing'. So closely are the witch and his pythons identified that if a python is killed the witch will die. The pythons are thought to be usually inherited from one or other parent, children of both sexes inheriting from either father or mother: children are 'born with witchcraft in their stomachs', and it is developed by accompanying a parent on his or her evil errands. However, not *all* children of a witch are necessarily witches. 'If a man witch marries a woman witch then the whole family are witches, but if the man is pure (*mwelu*), and the woman only a bit of a witch, then she may say to herself when she first bears a child:

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1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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shown by the way in which one fearing witchcraft, or accused of practising it, moves to another village. Sometimes he goes to another chiefdom, but often he only moves to another village in the same chiefdom—the chief himself may feel safe in one village of his country and not in another (*vide* Document, p. 190). It is on his fellow villagers that the good man depends for protection, and it is they whom the evil-doer fears.

Accusations within the lineage are rare. At first we were told that they did not occur at all; later a number of elderly informants agreed that this was not true—‘the young men have misled you’, they said; but careful inquiry only elicited three concrete cases¹ of witchcraft within the lineage (cf. table, p. 204). As we have seen, fellow members of a lineage normally live in different villages, and just how the idea of attacks by kinsmen is reconciled with the theory of village defence is not clear. Possibly it is argued that the witch attacks while visiting his kinsman, for it is in terms of visiting that the effect of ‘the breath of men’ on erring sons or younger brothers is explained. Where ‘the breath of men’ is thought to have affected someone of another village, it is argued that he or she came frequently to visit in the village of the attackers (cf. Document, p. 237), and the heir who neglects his elder brother’s or father’s funeral rites, and who is thought to suffer from ‘the breath’ of the deceased’s justly indignant neighbours, is supposed to fall ill when he comes to their village to enter into his inheritance, or to make arrangements for the disposal of his property.

Even within the village it is the immediate neighbours that are primarily concerned in a case of suspected witchcraft. In the large villages of the plains the leader of a section, ‘he of the heap of hot ashes’, has the specific duty of protecting the herd which stands in the smoke of his fire against witches; and in smaller villages, also, a witchcraft case commonly begins with murmuring among a few next-door neighbours. Suspicion of witchcraft falls first on a member of the same village-section, then on a fellow villager; only rarely, and in peculiar circumstances, does it fall on a member of another village, and never on someone outside the chiefdom.

Differences of rank are relatively slight in Nyakyusa society

¹ A possible fourth is quoted on p. 246, but the exact relationship of the accused to the victim was not known to our informant.

objection to marrying the child of one who has been convicted is clearly not pushed to its logical conclusion. No slur is cast on any one lineage when an individual is convicted of witchcraft, for he may have inherited it from either parent, or even got it from a friend; conversely no lineage is cleared by an autopsy, for not all the children of a witch are necessarily witches. Thus a man may have a father or brother or son who is 'pure', yet be a witch himself. As we have seen, even persons belonging to the same lineage may occasionally accuse each other. Nevertheless, when an individual who is reputed to be a witch dies, the close relatives do sometimes insist on an autopsy, in order to clear the deceased of suspicion, and possibly themselves also (*vide supra*, p. 117). In one case we recorded it was a daughter who insisted on the autopsy being performed on her mother, a reputed witch. No witchcraft was found.

So far we have dealt with cases of misfortune befalling an individual, followed by action against a fellow villager who is suspected of being responsible. This type of case is far the commonest within the field of witchcraft. When a general misfortune, such as a plague or epidemic, threatens, the chiefdom acts as a whole, not the villages separately, and the ritual is directed primarily to securing the blessing of the shades. There is some suggestion of ridding the chiefdom of witchcraft at the same time, but the emphasis is on appeasing the ancestors. The traditional new year cleansing (*ukutag' ikikungu*), now rarely performed, was also the concern of chiefdoms not separate villages, and it involved prayer to the ancestors.

b. The age-village and the ancestors

We have dwelt at length on witchcraft and 'the breath of men', for, in Nyakyusa belief, the defence of the village against witches and the punishment of wrong-doers by 'the breath' of their fellows is the main corporate activity of the village in the religious sphere. There are no village rituals directed to the ancestors comparable to those performed on behalf of lineages and chiefdoms. Indeed, belief in the power of shades operates only in situations where social position is determined by descent, as it is in lineages and in the succession to chieftainship. The office of village headman is not hereditary. The son of a village headman

- 621 cannot be appointed as headman in any village of his own genera-
769 tion, and villages of past generations disappear. When a headman
622 dies, his village still being in existence, his place is taken by his
heir who may be a son, but this office is only temporary. The
village ceases to exist when its original members die off. Moreover,
there is no suggestion that the shade of a headman's father broods
over the village as the shade of a chief is thought to brood over
the land he ruled.

775 The Nyakyusa have a lively belief in the power of shades, -a
belief closely connected with the dependence of the members of
a lineage upon one another for cattle,¹ and with the office of
'divine king', but such belief scarcely affects village relationships,
for the shades are not thought to be concerned with behaviour
between neighbours, as distinct from relatives.

775 It is true that the proper performance of family rituals includes
621 feasting neighbours, but the implication always is that the shades
602 are concerned only in enforcing obligations towards themselves
and fellow kinsmen, not towards non-relatives. On the other
hand, neighbours are concerned in the enforcement of kinship
obligations. When a son insults his father, the father's neighbours
are insulted also; when a daughter-in-law peeps at her father-in-
law the shocked astonishment of the neighbours may cause her
children to pine. And so, when an erring son begs pardon of his
father, he must provide a feast for the neighbours, 'that they may
see that his father is satisfied'.

775 A situation often arises in which both the shades and 'the breath
626 of men' operate, sometimes 'the breath' of shocked neighbours
754 supporting the shades, and sometimes shades and men each
exacting their due. One illustration of this was given us by
Kalunda: 'If you do not carry out the burial rites for your father,
people are angry, they throttle you, and the shade is angry also,
he comes on your body. No, the witches do not call the ancestors
to help; both are angry on their own account. To-day the black
ones, the witches, come and throttle you; to-morrow the ancestors
come. People are angry because they do not eat meat; the shade
is angry because you did not perform the burial rites for him. He
says: "See, I left much property, why did you not bury me
properly?"' And in discussing the obligation of a daughter-in-

¹ cf. Godfrey Wilson, 'An African Morality', *Africa*, Vol. IX (1936); Monica
Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Kinship' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*.

795 nected with it in a Christian village or village-section. The nearest
788 parallel to the pagan ritual of reconciliation is the formal re-
184 admission of a repentant sinner to the congregation.

795 The change in belief and ritual tends to weaken village solid-
621 arity; for the Christian village is neither a defensive unit, nor is
184 it the group from within which retribution and forgiveness come.
A Christian does not feel himself dependent upon village neigh-
bours to the same degree as does a pagan. We argue that the
extension of the range of interdependence reduces its intensity
in the narrower circles of relationship, and this is evident in the
religious as in the economic aspect.¹

622 Since the authority of a village headman is largely dependent
795 upon his supposed mystical power, Christians are rarely appointed
184 to this office by the Nyakyusa. We heard of only one Christian
headman and he was in the country of a Christian chief. Chris-
tians cannot go through the full 'coming out' ceremony which
involves treatment with medicines to give *amanga*, and a Chris-
tian headman cannot fulfil the traditional ritual functions in rela-
tion to the chief and his ancestors. But in Ngonde, where the per-
centage of Christians is high (46 per cent as opposed to 15 per
cent among the Nyakyusa) and the 'coming out' ceremony has
been dropped, there are a number of Christian headmen who
simply abstain from the performance of any pagan rituals (as does
the Kyungu himself) leaving them to those headmen who are
pagan and feel the ritual to be important. And pagan informants
whom we asked about defence against witchcraft in a village in
which the headman was a Christian, replied: 'Others will protect
the country from witchcraft,' implying that there are always
other 'defenders' in a village besides its leader.

In Christian village-sections the same difficulties do not arise,
for assistant headmen are never treated at the 'coming out', nor
have they ritual functions, other than the formal reproof of
supposed witches (*vide supra*, p. 109). Hence the recognized
leader of any group of Christians living in a pagan village is
normally a Christian. In Christian villages on mission land the
leaders are, of course, always Christian. These villages do not
participate in any 'coming out' ceremony and the leaders are
appointed by the missionary in consultation with the 'session'
(i.e. representatives of the congregation), not by the old chief and

¹ cf. G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 25-41.

This practice of having official witnesses to every contract, and summoning them to give evidence should a dispute later arise, is one of the most important means of maintaining order in Nyakyusa society, and village neighbours are the usual witnesses.

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c. Communal responsibility of the age-village

Formerly, in Nyakyusa law two forms of group responsibility were emphasized: the mutual responsibility of kinsmen, and the mutual responsibility of fellow villagers. A case of murder or manslaughter was primarily the concern of the agnatic lineage if the victim was a male or an unmarried girl, and of the lineages of both husband and father if the victim was a married woman. The kinsmen either killed the murderer, or brought him before the chief, who imposed a fine which went to the injured relatives. The Nyakyusa make a distinction between 'spearing by day' (direct physical injury) and 'spearing by night' (witchcraft); and only in the latter type of case did the fine go to the chief. Witchcraft was thus treated as an offence against the state—the chiefdom—while murder or manslaughter was an offence against the kinsmen of the dead. The concern of the state in witchcraft, and the joint responsibility of kinsmen on the one hand, and of fellow villagers on the other, was evident when, as sometimes happened, both groups were required by the chief to clear themselves of suspicion of witchcraft by each providing a representative to take the poison ordeal. Should the representative of either group fail to vomit then the responsible individual within that group was sought out by means of divination and the ordeal' (*vide supra*, p. 116).

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In a case of adultery the injured husband, together with his kinsmen, pursued and attempted to kill, or torture and kill, the adulterer: self-help was not only permitted but expected in this situation,¹ and a man's near kinsmen were obliged to assist him. Neighbours were not obliged to assist in executing vengeance, but they might be victims of it, for if the injured husband did not find the adulterer he might kill any village-mate of his enemy. Such an attack commonly led to war between the two villages;

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¹ D. R. MacKenzie, *The Spirit-Ridden Konde* (1925), p. 61, says: 'The injured husband has the right to inflict death on the paramour. This is no mere tale of the past but a grim fact to-day . . . cases of this nature are very numerous.'

684 and some informants suggested that it only occurred between the
696 villages of different chiefs, though others insisted that it did occur
721 between villages of the same chiefdom. Indeed any seduction of
a woman of another village was liable to lead to war. A man of
Bulindanajo seduced the wife of the headman of Bujeye, Mwan-
sambe. The men of Bulindanajo returned the woman to her
husband, saying to their fellow: 'The men of Bujeye are fearsome
(*basisya*), it's a village of fathers, she's your mother' (cf. Document
p. 181). But Mwansambe was angry and made war. The men of
Bulindanajo protested, saying: 'We brought the woman back!'
but he took no notice and attacked them. He was defeated, and
fled.

685 A thief or an obstinate debtor was also a danger to his neigh-
686 bours. For a victim or creditor living in another chiefdom, and so
696 unable to obtain satisfaction in a chief's court—since a chief paid
little attention to a complainant who was not his own man—
might seize the wife of any village-mate of the man who had his
property. Hence, the old men say, thieves and adulterers were
liable to be banished from a village¹ just like witches and sor-
cerers, for they too brought misfortune on their fellows.

672 War between villages was apparently the usual upshot of an
696 attack on the village neighbour of an enemy, but occasionally a
settlement was arranged between the two villages concerned, and
the adulterer or thief was held responsible for compensating his
injured neighbour, or the latter's kinsmen. Kalunda and Mwalu-
bunju explained: 'In the old days if a man ran off with my wife I
should go and kill a village-mate of his. That meant, "Go, you
villagers and look for my wife." Yes, this happened even in a
village of my own chief. Then the villagers would go and look for
my wife and when they found her with their neighbour they
would bring her back to me with a spear or hoe as compensation.
The man they would accuse, saying: "It was you who killed your
fellow", so that he would have to make peace with the family of
the dead man, not I. He would give them a daughter of his own
to wife, or else pay ten cows, and they would be relatives then.
Yes, ten cows they paid for a man's death, though only two for a
woman in marriage.' Here the differing responsibilities of kins-
men and fellow villagers are evident.

● 621 The village was a fighting unit taking up quarrels on its own
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¹ A cattle thief caught in the act was speared. . . . MacKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

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account with other villages of the same chiefdom, and forming a detachment under its own headman in the army of the chiefdom. Before an attack each village was harangued by its headman who urged: 'Keep all your spears together. If you abandon your fellow you have a case against you! All return together!' And, as we have seen, it was held that men of the same village should stand shoulder to shoulder in war and in a hunt, that they might be brave.

Cattle raids and adultery cases were the prime causes of war—fighting commonly began with a dispute over a woman, or lust for meat. Less frequently it was a quarrel between two villages or two chiefdoms over a boundary that led to war. Hostilities often flared up at a funeral when men danced the war dance with spears (*ukukina*). The Nyakyusa interpret this dancing at funerals as an expression of anger at death, a protest against death.¹ 'Formerly we protested against death, we said: "Our fellow has died, *aje!* Let us put our friend to rest!" We protested with war, we protested with spears, and people died.' Or as another informant put it, 'The war dance is a way of weeping. We dance the war dance because war is in our hearts.' But the anger at death very easily merged into anger against human enemies. 'If the men of two chiefdoms or two villages were present at a burial they would quarrel and fight. The fight began when one hurled his spear into the ground and thus spewed the earth over someone else. Perhaps there would be only a few dancing at first and many sitting down, but when a neighbouring chief was seen approaching with his men, and the sound of the trumpets was heard, those already there would say: "If we sit still they will say there are no men but only women at this funeral. Let us dance too." So they would all get up and dance, and if the others did anything there would be war. Now the custom of the war dance is dying out. We chiefs control it, and when another chief comes to a funeral we tell all our men to sit down while he and his men dance at the grave, because if we do not, the war of old times is liable to break out.'

In fact peace has been effectively enforced among the Nyakyusa.² We neither saw nor heard of a fight in the three years we were there. Thus mutual dependence in war is no longer a strong sanction for village unity. The joint responsibility for certain

¹ cf. Godfrey Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Conventions of Burial', *Bantu Studies*, Vol. XIII (1939.)

² A contrast to Pondoland or Zululand.

721 torts committed by its members has also disappeared. Instead,
672 there is both a great increase in the number of cases treated as
673 offences against the state; murder, manslaughter and grievous
177 bodily injury being no longer treated as offences against a group
of kin, but as crimes against the state; and a great extension in
the range of law. A modern Nyakyusa has no difficulty in suing
a debtor, or the seducer of his wife, living in another chiefdom.

• 621 Nevertheless neighbours still feel a certain obligation for the
672 maintenance of each other's rights. For example, a certain young
man eloped with a very young girl, who, though betrothed, had
not yet reached puberty. On their way out of the district they
were seen by a 'village father' of the girl, who brought them back
to her father, and then joined with him and other neighbours in
beating the young man and taking him to the chief. The youth
admitted his fault in seducing so young a girl and asked the chief
to summon his father-in-law (for he was already married) that he
might borrow from his father-in-law the cattle with which to pay
the fine for seduction. But his father-in-law was a neighbour of
the father of the girl he had seduced, and he refused to lend any
cattle, saying, 'You have run off with the daughter of my neigh-
bour in the village: that means you have wronged me.'

839 And a group of herd-boys are still liable to be treated by their
672 fathers as responsible for one another. One informant, discussing
a case of bestiality committed by a herd-boy, remarked that the
leader of the group forbade the others to mention it at home on
the ground that 'if our fathers know they will say that we all (in
this herd group) do it.'

d. Social separation

681 One of the mechanisms for maintaining good relations in
Nyakyusa villages (as in all groups) is the separation of the dissi-
dent individual from the group.¹ This separation may be com-
pulsory or voluntary. As we have seen, witches, thieves, adulter-
ers, and obstinate debtors were formerly banished from Nyak-
yusa villages because they were regarded as a danger to their
neighbours, liable to harm them directly or to bring retribution
upon them. The village, being held responsible for certain actions
of its members, and forming a defensive unit against the sup-

¹ cf. G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 60-1.

166 is another reason also for increasing movement. Formerly, to
578 move to a strange chiefdom was hazardous—a refugee might be
164 killed, or his wife or cattle seized by the chief; nowadays it is safe.
Even to-day a man's status is lower in the village in which he is
a stranger than in his home village. The old families of a village,
'the owners of the soil' (*abilema*), are spoken of as *amafumu*,
which, in its restricted sense, means village headmen who have
'come out' with the chief, but which is also used more widely
for commoners of importance. And in the past, we were told, an
individual's security of life and property depended upon the
support of his neighbours, the *amafumu*, and a stranger was much
less likely to receive this than an 'owner of the soil'. If a chief
seized a stranger's wife no one would protest, but if he dared to
touch the wife of an 'owner of the soil' the village would rise as
one man. Hence the incentive to overcome friction by submission,
rather than by moving, was stronger in the old society than it is
to-day.¹ It may well become stronger again soon. The present
circulation from village to village is possible because men are
still scarcer than land in Nyakyusa country, but as the population
increases, and the production of crops for sale expands, it is
probable that strangers will be less welcome and movement more
difficult.

166 To lose a member who has not been expelled is a slur on a
624 village, for the implication is that the man who has moved has
suffered from the witchcraft of his neighbours. A good neighbour
should persuade a fellow contemplating a voluntary move to stay
(*vide infra*, p. 243), and when someone has moved of his own
accord (and sometimes even when he has been expelled) his
fellows go, after the lapse of a little time, to fetch him back.

'When a man moves from his home chiefdom, his village neighbours there, in the majority of cases, follow him within two months and ceremonially invite him back with a show of force by seizing his belongings and carrying them off home to his old village. They may really like and respect him and if, as is usually the case, he has moved because of sickness, they are most anxious to prove to him that his tacit suspicions are unfounded, they wish to rid themselves of the slur of witchcraft. To invite him back is to express affection for him and so to demonstrate that he could

¹ cf. the modern tendency for Fionia homesteads to break up. Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 39.

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not have been bewitched, for see, everyone likes him! Such an invitation is often, but by no means always, accepted. If a man refuses the first time then the villagers may or may not go again later to ask him back; but if he was an important member of the village—the headman, a noted doctor, the son of an old family—the invitation may go on being repeated for years; and he will then almost certainly return in the end. Whether or not he accepts a particular invitation depends again largely on his own health and that of his family and upon his relations with his new neighbours at the time it is made. Sickness and suspected witchcraft, or quarrels and insults in the new village will incline him to go home (see Document, p. 267). And a man can always return, even without an invitation, unless he was originally expelled for being himself a witch.¹

If an important or popular man is slow to return 'home' his former friends not only go to fetch him, again and again, during the course of years but, if he dies before his return, his corpse may be fetched back to be buried in his original village. He is also summoned to feasts there. The village was a fighting unit, and its strength, like that of the chiefdom, depended upon its numbers; hence the reluctance to lose a man and the readiness to welcome new-comers.

Men who have moved voluntarily usually return 'home' to their original village in the end. As a Selya man explained: 'The majority do come back, only a few stay permanently away. Some move for better food, the great majority because they fall sick and wish to recollect themselves in the tranquillity of another chiefdom—this is the main reason for moving, but they come back in the end. Whenever a man is alighted in the country to which he has gone, whenever he falls sick there—back he goes home. A man does not lose his affection for home, for there is his sacred grove, his fathers' graves. But the real reason for returning is that in every other place a man is less respected than at home, he is made light of; but in his own country he is known to belong to an old family and is treated with great respect, his neighbours call to mind the days when he and they herded cows together as boys, and the fact that his father is buried among them. That is why people go home again.'

¹ Godfrey Wilson, *The Land Rights of Individuals among the Nyakyusa*, pp. 30-3.

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to rejoin the group in which he is 'known', in which he has 'friends with whom he herded cattle as a boy', as that which provides the chief impetus to return. Never once did an informant suggest friction with the village headman as the reason for moving¹ or loyalty to a former headman as the reason for returning. The Nyakyusa village is in no way the personal following of a headman, as the villages of some other central African peoples (such as the Bemba,² Yao, and Ngoni³) appear to be. It is essentially a group of equals, established before adolescence, whose stability and continuity turn on friendship and co-operation between its members. It is already a corporate group, with very close bonds forged through years between its members, before the permanent leader is chosen, and it continues as a group though its leader dies or moves.

We do not deny that the personality of the village headman—particularly his generosity and his skill in settling disputes between his men—affects the stability and growth of the village; some villages increase noticeably in size after the 'coming out', while others shrink, and headmen (like chiefs) use medicines to attract men to them; but the Nyakyusa themselves imply that it is the character of the villagers rather than the character of the headman which determines movement to and from the village.

The headman, like any private individual in the village, must remain on good terms with the other members lest he be driven out. A number of cases were cited in which headmen had moved because they had become unpopular with their men and feared their 'breath' or witchcraft (*vide* pp. 204-8; 268-70) but most of them had returned after the lapse of a little time.

What private individuals and headmen alike fear is not a quarrel with one individual, but the disapproval of the village or village-section as a whole; for 'the breath of men' is but the crystallization of adverse public opinion. The man who has the support of his fellows in a dispute with one neighbour is shielded in 'the war by night'.

¹ Personal friction with a chief occurs (*vide* pp. 191-2).

² A. I. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 110 ff.

³ M. Gluckman, J. C. Mitchell, and J. A. Barnes, 'The Village Headman in British Central Africa', *Africa*, Vol. XIX (1949), pp. 91, 98, 100.

CHAPTER VII

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGE-VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

a. *The peculiarity of Nyakyusa villages*

621 VILLAGES in which contemporaries live together permanently
561 have not been reported among any people in Africa other than the
171 Nyakyusa; such villages are not found among their neighbours,
and diligent inquiry from Africans of many tribes has not re-
vealed them elsewhere; it is possible that the Nyakyusa system is
unique, but we still know too little of Africa to be sure. A similar
system might well exist elsewhere without having been noted by
Europeans. The fact that Nyakyusa villages were organized on an
age basis was not recorded either by the missionaries¹ or the
Administration, though the system of Indirect Rule had been in
operation for eight years before we began work in the district.

What is common in Africa is for groups of male contemporaries
—age-sets—to live together in temporary villages or club houses
before marriage. The warrior-villages of the Masai,² the regi-
mental barracks of Zulu³ and Swazi,⁴ the cattle posts of Tswana⁵
and Pedi,⁶ are all occupied by groups of contemporaries; while
among the Kikuyu⁷ and the Kipsigis⁸ local detachments of age-

¹ D. R. MacKenzie, *The Spirit-Ridden Konde*, speaks of 'small boys' living in 'tiny houses' of their own (pp. 27-8); J. T. Hamilton, *Twenty Years of Pioneer Missions in Nyasaland*, says: 'The elder boys live together in long oblong houses at the end of the village. When one of them marries he builds a house near the boys' quarter, and in this manner the village extends in 'this direction.' (p. 40.) He does not suggest any further separation of the generations.

² L. S. B. Leakey, 'Some Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony', *J.R.A.I.*, LX (1930), pp. 185-209; D. Storrs Fox, 'Further Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony', *J.R.A.I.*, LX (1930), pp. 447-65.

³ E. J. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, pp. 261-7.

⁴ H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, pp. 117-37.

⁵ I. Schapera, *Native Land Tenure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate*, pp. 25, 230-9.

⁶ G. M. Pitje, *Some Aspects of Male Education among the Pedi and Cognate Tribes*. (Thesis accepted for the M.A. degree in the University of South Africa. Unpublished.)

⁷ W. S. and K. Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People*, p. 118.

⁸ J. G. Peristiany, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis*, pp. 49-51.

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sets have club houses in which young men sleep. Among the Cewa, though boys do not move out of the parent village, they have a special hut in which they sleep together from the age of five or six.¹ But among all these people the age-set scatters at marriage, each young man building his permanent home, to which he brings his wife, alongside his kinsmen or, in the case of the Cewa, alongside his wife's kin.

The peculiarity of the Nyakyusa then consists in the fact that contemporaries live together permanently through life, not merely as bachelors: age-villages appear in an isolated area surrounded (so far as we know) by people with no similar institution.

We cannot hope to explain how, or when, age-villages developed among the Nyakyusa: there is no reference to them in such documents as exist, and we could trace no oral tradition regarding their origin. Even the historian Mwandesi (cf. p. vi) had no idea whether age-villages were introduced by the incoming Nyakyusa chiefs, or were found by them among the previous inhabitants of the valley, or were invented after the conquest. We can, however, inquire into the social characteristics associated with age-villages. *What are the peculiarities of Nyakyusa society not found in societies with kinship villages?* In this chapter we attempt to answer that question.

b. Age-villages and incest

The Nyakyusa themselves associate living in age-villages with decency in sex life—the separation of the sex activities of successive generations, and the avoidance of incest. When asked why small boys build apart from their parents they refer to the danger of a growing boy overhearing lewd talk between his parents, or seeing them unclothed (*vide supra*, p. 82); and they enlarge on the difficulties of father- and daughter-in-law avoidance were father and son to live in the same village—an avoidance which is consciously related to the fear of incest between father- and daughter-in-law (*vide supra*, p. 85). We may add also the fear of young men seducing their fathers' junior wives, who are often girls of their own age. Nyakyusa informants did not mention this last point as a reason for living in age-villages, but it is significant

¹ A. G. O. Hodgson, 'Notes on the Achewa and Angoni of the Dowa District of Nyasaland Protectorate', *J.R.A.I.*, LXIII (1933), p. 129.

621 that adolescent sons are not permitted to visit their homes after
834 dark, and when they come by day for their meals they are
606 often required to eat in the open court-yard and not 'hide in
the bananas or huts' lest they make love to their fathers' wives.
They do not sit about in the men's village. Thus, although the
villages of fathers and sons adjoin until the sons 'come out', the
young men are physically separated from their young 'mothers'.

[171] The feeling that sons should not be cognizant of the sex
activities of parents, and that father-in-law and daughter-in-law
should avoid one another is not, of course, peculiar to the Nyak-
yusa; all we seek to show is that the extreme elaboration of these
avoidances among the Nyakyusa is dependent upon the existence
of age-villages. Whereas a Pondo daughter-in-law must never
walk across the courtyard of the kinship village in which she
lives, or approach the cattle byre or the men's side of her
mother-in-law's hut, lest she come too near her father-in-law,
yet, living in the same village, she necessarily sees him daily; the
Nyakyusa daughter-in-law, living in a separate village, need not
(and should not) set eyes on her father-in-law after her marriage.
Where the territorial segregation of fathers and sons is blurred
(as at Rungwe) there father- daughter-in-law avoidance is less
strictly observed. The Nyakyusa regard this extreme form of
avoidance as a peculiarity of their culture which has been im-
parted by them to the small groups (such as Ndali, Penja, and
Nyika) whom they are assimilating.

Father- and daughter-in-law incest is clearly a potential danger
in a society in which cattle are controlled by middle-aged and
elderly men, who frequently have to choose between taking
another wife themselves and giving cattle for a son's marriage,
and who are accustomed to marrying young girls of an age suit-
able to be wives to their sons. But we cannot show that the danger
is *greater* among the Nyakyusa than it is among other patrilineal
cattle people such as the Pondo, Zulu, or Swazi, who do not
find it necessary to segregate fathers- and daughters-in-law in
different villages.

545 On the other hand the danger (common to all polygynous
582 societies) of sons seducing their fathers' wives is exaggerated
among the Nyakyusa by the absence of circumcision, the late
marriage age of men, the very early betrothal and marriage of
girls, the high degree of polygyny, and the practice of sons

587 woman. It is scarcely surprising that the seduction of the young
835 wives of an ageing father is a common theme for scandal. We do not suggest that the Oedipus complex involving own mother and son never occurs among the Nyakyusa; what we are concerned to show is that the relationship between a man and his step-mothers is particularly likely to be ambivalent.

593 It may be asked why there is so much emphasis on the segregation
584 of sons from their parents, and not of daughters. The answer again lies in the sex difference in the marriage age. Betrothed girls pay long visits to their husbands even before puberty, and directly after the initiation which follows first menstruation they leave their fathers' home to join their husbands. During her initiation a girl carefully avoids her father and his contemporaries in the village, and after marriage, when she returns home to visit, she must observe certain restrictions not applicable to an unmarried girl: notably she must not approach her parents' bed, and informants interpret the taboo as being due to the danger of mixing the sex activities of mother and daughter.

621 In short, we argue that there is a connection between the existence
835 of age-villages and the fear of incest between father-in-law and daughter-in-law on the one hand, and between stepson and stepmother on the other, and we suggest that certain features of the Nyakyusa social system facilitate incest of the second type. The incest theme elaborated in one fashion among people organized in clans and practising clan exogamy, and in another among people practising brother-sister avoidance, finds yet a different expression in age-villages, of which the overt purpose is the separation of sons and mothers, of fathers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

c. Good company

577 The emphasis on the separation of parents and children is
621 matched by the value laid on good fellowship (*ukwangala*) between contemporaries. A main end of age-villages, in the Nyakyusa view, is to allow men the enjoyment of congenial company, that is the company of friends and equals. The value of *ukwangala* is, indeed, directly linked with the age-village organization: to attain it men must build not only in villages, rather than in scattered homesteads, but also with contemporaries rather than with kin, since there can be no free and easy inter-

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course and sharing of food and beer between fathers and sons. 577
Ukwangala implies eating and drinking together frequently, and 621
cannot be fully enjoyed by people who do not live close to one
another.

The value of good fellowship with equals is constantly talked 577
about by the Nyakyusa, and it is dinned into boys from child- 869
hood that enjoyment and morality alike consist in eating and
drinking, in talking and learning, in the company of contemporaries. The solitary and aloof, those who enjoy the company of
women (as opposed to direct sexual satisfaction) and those who
seek intimacy with members of another generation, are derided.

Now this very emphasis on the value of good fellowship with 577
equals is doubtless a reflection of the difficulty of achieving it. 578
The frequent accusations of witchcraft and movement from one
village to another are evidence of friction between fellow villagers. Does the friction turn on the age-village organization?

d. *The incidence of accusations of witchcraft*

As we have seen, witchcraft is believed to operate primarily 578
within the village, and the typical accusation is against a neigh- 754
bour.¹ But in other societies also witchcraft accusations are most
commonly made against those with whom one is living, and in
close daily contact: in Pondoland it is members of the same home-
stead or of neighbouring homesteads who suspect one another of
witchcraft; among Xhosa-speaking people in towns it is fellow
employees, or fellow schoolmates; among the Azande it is mem-
bers of the same small neighbourhood. Therefore it is not
only the Nyakyusa who accuse village neighbours of witchcraft.

Of the frequency of accusation in different societies we can 754
make no comparison, for statistics on witchcraft are extremely
difficult to collect. Few field-workers could be certain that they
were cognizant of every accusation of witchcraft within a given

¹ Over a third of the accusations of witchcraft recorded were against neigh-
bours, as distinct from spouses or co-wives or kinsmen and, if one excludes the
modern type of accusation against fellow workers in the same camp, the propor-
tion of accusations against neighbours is almost one half. The thirty-eight
witchcraft accusations cannot, of course, be taken as a random sample in the
technical sense; we recorded every case that came to our ears, but cannot be
certain that inquiries brought to light every accusation in the villages investi-
gated. Nevertheless the preponderance of accusations against neighbours is
significant (*vide* Document, pp. 198 ff.).

754 area, during a given period, so we cannot either assert or deny that accusations of witchcraft are more frequent in age-villages than in kinship villages.

578 There are two sets of loyalties in Nyakyusa society: those to a kinship group and those to an age-village. Does conflict arise from a clash between them? We have no evidence that it does.

621 It is true that kin may support a sick relative against his age-group, referring to his illness as due to witchcraft, whereas 602 neighbours will attribute it to his own sin and their legitimate anger; but very often the ancestors and the 'defenders' are believed to work together to punish wrong-doers—those who break avoidance and incest taboos, those who insult seniors, those who neglect traditional rituals (*vide supra*, p. 122). Amity between relatives is sanctioned by neighbours as well as by senior kinsmen, and the importance of enjoying the company of village mates is constantly stressed by relatives. Where a village does appear to support a member against his kin, it is usually on the side of the ancestors and 'justice', in terms of the Nyakyusa code, as when neighbours share a father's anger at the insolence of his son, or after his death protect his son against unjust treatment by the heir. The values of village solidarity and of kinship solidarity are thus coherent.

e. *The form of witch beliefs*

621 There is, however, a connection between the age-village organization and the *form* of witch beliefs. As we have seen, great 754 emphasis is laid on feasting neighbours, and it is believed that 626 the impulse to witchcraft comes from the lust for milk and meat. The Nyakyusa argue thus: witchcraft comes from neighbours, and neighbours must be fed or they get angry; feeding a witch on milk or beef pacifies him (*vide supra*, p. 92). An explicit connection is made between neglecting to provide feasts on the proper occasions and suffering from 'the breath' of justly angry neighbours whose blighting power springs from the same root as witchcraft. The contrast with the witch beliefs of the Pondo is marked: among them it is held that the drive to witchcraft is sex lust, and all witches have familiars with whom they have sex relations.¹

¹ Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-88.

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The Nyakyusa emphasis upon lust for food as the incentive to crime is not due to starvation, for they are among the best-fed people in Africa, with a much greater variety and quantity of food at their disposal than the Pondo. Why, then, this emphasis in their witch beliefs? We suggest that it is directly connected with living with non-relatives who have no share in one's inheritance. The most prized possession of the Nyakyusa is cattle, and cattle are controlled by lineages. Neighbours who are not kinsmen, and who cannot hope to benefit by inheritance or through assistance with marriage and funeral cattle from a fellow's herd, are more likely to be jealous of his wealth in cattle than are his brothers and sons who directly share in it through inheritance, and the gift of cattle at marriage and death. The only profit which neighbours derive from the herd of a rich fellow is the milk and meat on which he feasts them. Jealousy of another's wealth is a common enough cause for supposed witchcraft, but the affront of inequality is greater when it is constantly before one's eyes. Nyakyusa live close-packed in villages and can hardly be unaware of what next-door neighbours eat. The statement that the pythons of witches are roused by the *smell* of meat cooking and the *smell* of milk (*vide supra*, p. 92) suggests the envy of a poor neighbour when he smells the roast beef and curds next door. Where the local group consists of a lineage (as among the Pondo) people are not necessarily aware of what non-relatives eat. Among the Pondo the pressure to kill cattle for meat comes from within the lineage, and is associated not with the witches but with the ancestors. Sickness is commonly attributed to the *hunger* of the ancestors (*balambile*), who 'want to eat by means of him' who is ill (*bafuna ukudla ngaye*),¹ a notion quite strange to the Nyakyusa.

In short, we argue that it is because people who do not benefit from each other's herds by inheritance and the provision of marriage and funeral cattle, live close to one another, that so much emphasis is laid on the lust for milk and meat as the drive to witchcraft among the Nyakyusa.

And why the Pondo emphasis on sex? Are they more inhibited than the Nyakyusa? At first sight the Pondon sex code seems a freer one than that of the Nyakyusa. The marriage age of men is no later than among the Nyakyusa, while the marriage age of girls is considerably higher, and unmarried men are free to

¹ Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 232, 245.

g. Kith and kin

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621 The tendency to identify neighbours and kinsmen—kith and kin—appears not only in religious belief, the two groups being credited with somewhat similar mystical power; but also in verbal usage—‘fathers of the village’, ‘mothers of the village’, ‘sisters of the village’, etc.; in the obligation to respect a father’s fellows, to run errands for them and obey their orders; in the belief that a father’s neighbours are insulted by an insult to the father, and must be pacified as well as the real father; and in the responsibility of villagers for certain torts of a fellow. The distinction between neighbours and kinsmen is, however, clear-cut in marriage, in rituals, and in the control of cattle. Fellow villagers marry each other’s daughters; they neither perform the elaborate ritual at death or twin birth believed to be necessary for the safety of relatives, nor are they required to help each other with cattle for marriages, funeral rites, and fines, as are kinsmen.¹

Kinsmen are bound together by their common interest in the inherited stock of the lineage and in the cattle coming in for its daughters; by co-operation in cultivation and building; and by the belief that they are mystically interdependent—the contagion of defilement and of certain diseases caused by sorcery travelling along the roads of kinship. Village neighbours are bound together by occupation and ownership of common land; by co-operation in herding and cultivation; and by common defence against enemies ‘by day and by night’. In both groups discipline is thought to be maintained by mystical as well as material sanctions, the anger of neighbours bringing ill-health like the anger of senior relatives; and both groups have certain responsibilities for their members in relations with other like groups.

h. Relative social status

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561 The Nyakyusa material suggests certain further connections between the age-village organization and other aspects of the social structure which comparative study shows to be false. For example, it might be argued for the Nyakyusa (as it has been for

¹ Monica Wilson, ‘Nyakyusa Kinship’ in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*.

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the Kikuyu)¹ that the equalitarian emphasis is related to the emphasis on age-organization. As we have seen, hereditary office exists among the Nyakyusa but the power of chief and hereditary priest is limited at every point by the power of the leaders of age-sets who are chosen each generation from among commoners. That democratic (i.e. non-hereditary) leadership is not a necessary concomitant of a developed age-organization is, however, proved by the fact that among the Zulu, Swazi, Pedi, and Tswana, whose military organization was based on age-regiments, rank is stressed, and the leaders of age-sets are always sons or kinsmen of the chief.

It is possible, however, that the low status of Nyakyusa women relative to men is partly dependent on the age-village organization. It is most obviously related to the high degree of polygyny, and the fact that the position of the various wives is not clearly determined by date of marriage, birth, or allocation of property. For a commoner the first wife betrothed is his great wife, who takes precedence in ritual, but there is no ranking of houses and allocation of the bulk of property to different houses as among the Nguni, nor the same strong pressure on a husband to visit each wife in rotation. Instead there is acute competition between a man's various wives for the position of favourite, with a disproportionate share of milk and meat and of her husband's attention. We do not suggest that there is no competition among the wives of a Pondo or Zulu polygynist, but we argue that competitive tendencies have freer play among the Nyakyusa,² and that this competition depresses the status of women in relation to men.

Like the kinship organization, the age-village organization favours men. As we have seen, a main end of age-villages, in the Nyakyusa view, is to allow men the enjoyment of congenial company, that is the company of friends and equals. A village consists of a group of male contemporaries and their dependants; ideally, the men live together all their lives and form a close-knit group of equals, between whom mutual loyalty, hospitality, and affability is fostered from childhood. Those who move tend to go to villages in which they already have close friends. The women,

¹ J. Kenyatta, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-9.

² Unfair division of milk between wives is said by some Nyakyusa to anger the ancestors who cause the cows to give blood in place of milk; nevertheless unequal allocation of milk is a much commoner cause of complaint than it is among the Pondo.

● 621 on the other hand, come from many villages, and they move from
561 village to village more than men, because most women are in-
562 herited at least once in their lives. Nor do the women form an
age-set, for men inherit wives as old, or older than themselves,
and they continue to marry young brides until they themselves
are elderly. A village thus contains women of all ages, the older
ones often being quite late-comers to it. There is neither the
unity of a kinship group, with leadership of mother or grand-
mother, as among a matrilineal people like the Bemba, nor the
leadership of the mother-in-law as among the patrilineal Nguni
and Sotho peoples. It is true that among the latter peoples the
leadership of women devolves on a man's senior wife when his
mother is dead, but the pattern has developed in a society in
which daughters-in-law usually live for a long time in the same
homestead as their mother-in-law, whereas among the pagan
Nyakyusa a woman rarely joins her own son until she is decrepit,
long after his marriage. When the Nguni or Sotho chief wife is
obeyed by her co-wives it is as the successor of her mother-in-
law; indeed on the latter's death she is often referred to by junior
wives as 'mother'. Where women have authority in a patrilineal
society it is usually as mother, or grandmother, or father's sister.
But there are none with such positions in the context of the age-
village; the office of headman is not hereditary so there is no
mother of the heir, and the headman's own mother and sisters
normally live elsewhere.

562 Such solidarity and leadership as exist among women in pagan
613 Nyakyusa society are within the group of women of the same
595 lineage who live together. Great emphasis is laid on the propriety
of a wife bringing a younger sister, or brother's daughter, as a
junior wife for her husband (*ukusakula*): this is felt to be a com-
pliment to the husband and a comfort to the wife, proof that the
marriage has been a success. Co-wives who are of the same lineage
are very closely identified, their children being treated almost as
full siblings, and they themselves co-operating in everything.

562 One of the marked changes in contemporary Nyakyusa society
795 is the development of leadership among women in the Christian
congregations.

i. *Constitutional form*

Two other negative points are worth noting. First, the Nyakyusa fought among themselves and honoured a brave warrior, but they never developed a military kingdom, nor did they regard battle as the chief end of man. Emphasis on the value of war is not, then, a necessary concomitant of a developed age-organization, as a study of the Masai, Zulu, Swazi, and Pedi material might suggest. Secondly, the constitutional division of a chiefdom once every generation is not dependent upon the age-village organization, for such a division was common enough among the southern Nguni whose age-organizations were of relatively small importance. Among the Pondo and Xhosa the 'great son' and the 'right-hand son' of a chief very often both became independent; the main condition of their separation and independence being that there should be ample land in which they might live, each with his own followers.¹ Nyakyusa chiefdoms could divide in each generation because the Nyakyusa were an expanding population in relatively empty country.

j. *Necessary conditions of age-villages*

The limitations of the connections we have attempted to show must be realized. None of the characteristics cited are *correlates* of age-villages, for in each case either the age-villages could exist without them, or they could exist without age-villages: e.g. fathers- and daughters-in-law could not avoid one another completely if they lived in the same village, but the separate villages in which they live need not necessarily be age-villages; age-villages might be established though father- and daughter-in-law did not avoid one another; and so on. We claim only that these characteristics of Nyakyusa society which have been cited *partly* determine, and are themselves partly determined by, the age-village organization.

There are, however, certain other characteristics of Nyakyusa society without which age-villages such as we have described could not exist at all. The first of these is the redistribution of

¹ J. H. Soga, *Ama-Xosa Life and Customs*, pp. 25-49; M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, pp. 379-80.

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178 land in each generation. The territorial segregation of fathers and sons is directly dependent upon the shifting of the old men after the 'coming out' ceremony, without which the young men would not have sufficient land to establish themselves as a compact group on land adequate to support their growing families. Where no redistribution of land takes place, as on mission land and in the chiefdoms where the 'coming out' ceremony has been dropped, the territorial division between age groups becomes blurred within a generation.

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178 Redistribution of land in each generation depends upon two further conditions: the existence of ample land to support the population, and relatively little development of land. As soon as land becomes scarce those in possession of it are reluctant to agree to redistribution. It is significant that the most valuable land of all in Nyakyusa country—that in old craters—is *not* redistributed at a 'coming out' ceremony, but is retained by an individual until his death, and then inherited by kinsmen. And as soon as improvements are made in the form of planting long-term crops, or building durable and expensive houses, the difficulties of redistribution are increased. Nyakyusa land-law recognized the right of an elder who had moved, or of his son, to the bamboos and *imisyunguti* trees he had planted (*vide supra*, p. 46). But such rights become much more complicated when it is not only an odd clump of bamboos or two or three trees which are at stake, but a large patch of coffee; or when, in place of the old-fashioned long hut (*ikibaga*) built with the co-operation of kinsmen and neighbours, there is a more substantial house with expensive doors and windows made by an expert carpenter. It has been shown that where individual rights over trees or other long-term crops are recognized, and such crops are planted on a large scale, individual tenure of land, as opposed to a temporary right of usufruct, tends to develop.¹

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178 Secondly, the solidarity of the Nyakyusa age-village, as of kinship villages in other African societies, is a function of a small-scale society. Fellow villagers have been hitherto, and are still in a large measure, dependent upon one another for land, for aid in economic undertakings, for sympathy and good fellowship, and for protection 'by night and by day'. But such mutual dependence is visibly decreasing. In the economic field co-opera-

¹ C. K. Meek, *Land Law and Custom in the Colonies*, p. 28.

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tion is already as important beyond as within the village, and village control over the main cash crops has not been established, as it was over certain food crops. With increasing centralization the village headman, embodiment of the solidarity and relative autonomy of each village, is losing power to the chiefs and courts, on the one hand, and to the specialist agriculturalists, school teachers, elders, and ministers of religion on the other. 621
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Friendships beyond the age-village are fostered by common experiences at a boarding school or a labour centre, and by common interests as members of a church or a coffee co-operative which does not necessarily include fellow villagers. And most important of all, fellow villagers are not bound to one another in resistance to external dangers as they were formerly. Lion, leopard, and buffalo still exist in the district, but we heard of no recent case of a village combining for defence against dangerous (as distinct from destructive) game: if action were necessary a European sportsman was usually glad of the chance of a bag. With the cessation of cattle-raiding and inter-village warfare, the curtailment of the right of self-help, and the development of courts with power to enforce judgement in cases involving members of different chiefdoms, dependence on fellow villagers for protection from material dangers and the responsibility of a village for the actions of its members, virtually cease. A sense of dependence upon neighbours for mystical protection lingers, but as elementary education, belief in Christian dogma, and the solidarity of Christian congregations increase, this supposed dependence upon the *amanga* or mystical power of neighbours also lessens. Many men who fear sorcery (including poisoning) do not fear witchcraft, and it is only against witches that neighbours are believed to protect one. Thus change in the form of beliefs is correlated with the development of more intense relationships beyond the village. 621
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An age-village organization is probably dependent upon isolation in another fashion also: by their own account the Nyakyusa feeling that close association between successive generations is improper has been blunted by the example of Europeans and Swahili who do not share this feeling (*vide supra*, p. 69). The missionaries teach that avoidance between father- and daughter-in-law is unnecessary, if not in itself sinful, and the implication is that only 'superstition' maintains the taboo (*vide* 621
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- 621 *supra*, p. 84). The Nyakyusa pattern of avoidance has undoubtedly influenced that of the small groups absorbed by them, but they in turn have been influenced by these groups, and by the example of Christians of neighbouring tribes. In Ilo avoidance between father- and daughter-in-law is much less strict than in Selya. This was attributed partly to the influence of neighbouring small groups of Nyika and Penja, who had not the same tradition of strict avoidance as the Nyakyusa, and partly to the influence of the Christians, whose number was proportionately greater in Ilo than in Selya. As Nyakyusa informants argued: the pagans see Christian women disregard avoidance taboos, and they see that nothing dreadful happens to them (as the result of their neglect), so the pagans, too, begin to think that avoidance is of no importance.

- 621 The relationship between the generations is also modified among the Nyakyusa, as among other African people, by the power of young men to earn money and so command wealth. As 561 we have seen, sons are in a position to *invite* their fathers to drink beer in the father's own homestead. Once fathers and sons have 178 begun to *ukwagala*, drinking beer together, and once the horror of a woman seeing her father-in-law has diminished, then there is much less insistence on the need to buttress separation of the generations by territorial segregation. When convenient, fathers and sons will continue to live apart, but if a building site and arable land near his age-mates is lacking a son may suggest that avoidance does not really matter after all, and his father (if a Christian or a sceptic) may agree to the son building near him.

- 621 Nyakyusa age-villages still flourish, but they are hardly likely to survive many decades with increasing pressure on land, the 561 planting of coffee and other long-term crops, the development of trade and migration, and a diminishing isolation from the ideas 178 and values of the outside world. Age is no longer the sole basis for village grouping in Rungwe district—common belief and common occupation now provide other grounds for building together. There are Christian villages, an administrative station, a military station, and trading centres such as Mwaya, the Lake port. Tukuyu (the administrative centre) has its police lines, quarters for hospital attendants, traders' quarters, and so on, while Masoko has soldiers' and traders' quarters. This account 000 of age-villages may therefore have some significance as a docu-

1. VILLAGES IN MWAIPOPO'S CHIEFDOM (1938)

Information from numerous informants

J. Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Generation	Chief	Sub Chief	Senior Headman	Headman	Village	Category	Legal Authority	Remarks
I ¹	Mwaizonga ²		Nyobakom		IPENDA	Senior village of Mwaizonga		Village survives only ritually—there is no group of men living together as Ipenda. Nyobakom is senior priest of Mwaizonga and sets sacred meat of cow sacrificed in Mwaizonga's grove
				Klamgata	IUKI			Not surviving
					ITESE	Second senior ³ village of Mwaizonga	Nyalyo settles disputes but is subject to senior headman of next generation, Mwanambe (below)	Village survives with 11 members (original or their heirs). Nyalyo is a priest of Mwaizonga and sets the sacred meat in Mwaizonga's grove
				Mwanambe ("Mwakyum") ⁴ inherited	Bukaba			Not surviving
				Mwakiblingwa ("Kashebu")	Iumba			Not surviving
II	Mwaipopo I (son of Mwaizonga)		Mwanambe ("Mwakyum") inherited from his father		BUJEJE	Senior village of Mwaipopo. Sons of Ipenda and Iuki	Mwanambe. Mwanamunga settles disputes during Mwanambe's absence, and subject to him	"Dying out" of Mwaipopo I and his brothers was in this village. Mwanambe as present living in another chieftain but returns for ceremonies and to hear cases

¹ The names of villages of Mwakagila, father of Mwaizonga, have perished: the names of Ipenda and Iebe will be forgotten when Mwaipopo (generation II) dies.² Italics indicate that the person named is dead.³ Informants were not all agreed about the relative status of villages and headmen of Mwaizonga's time.⁴ Most individuals are known by more than one name—we include two when two were in common use.

[P.181]

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VILLAGES IN NWAIPPOPO'S CHIEFDOM (1938)—cont.

Order No.	Chief	Sub Chief	Senior Headman	Headman	Village	Category	Legal Authority	Remarks
22	Wawapopo II (Village Council and body of Wawapopo the people)			Kabete (Wawapopo the people)	Kapaga ¹		Kabete	Kabete who buried Wawapopo I there here
					Lapaga ²	Other section of Kapaga	No separate leader	Consists of 30 men who moved in 'moving out' of Wawapopo from Kapaga. The above men moved, leaving their younger counterparts here (Kabete, etc.) to Kapaga. Kabete has been the Kabete the village leader. Formerly a section of Kapaga.
					Kutaka ³	'Younger brothers of Wawapopo who went with him', i.e. son of his genera- tion	Wawapopo's (The Kabete) section of Kapaga	Formerly buried Wawapopo I
						'Offshoot of Kapaga'		Not established as a separate village as 'moving out' of Wawapopo. It is really a section of Kapaga.
				Mwanta	Kutaka ⁴	Most younger sons went of Kapaga and Kapaga and Kapaga	Mwanta	Wawapopo II originally had here. There was once a battle between Kutaka ⁴ and Kapaga (see p. 100).
		Likopala		Wawapopo	Kibanda		Wawapopo	

¹ Kabete having direct authority over his own village, each senior headman has authority over other villages established at the 'moving out' with their own
headmen (see p. 21). The villages subordinate to each senior headman are listed in column 4 immediately under his own village.

² Lapaga is territorially separate, and appears as a separate village, but structurally it is really a section of Kapaga. Other villages of this type are mentioned
elsewhere.

VILLAGES IN MWAIPPOPO'S CHIEFDOM (1888)—contd.

Generation	Chief	Sub Chief	Senior Headman	Headman	Village	Category	Legal Authority	Remarks
II	Mwalipopo II		Mwalikya Mwakwasa ('Mwalimwa') inherited from Mwalikya		LUPANDO	Second senior village of Mwalipopo. Sons of Sukaka	Mwakwasa	Old men have moved to one side. Lupando was originally established as two villages but when the headman of the senior (Mwalikya) died, the villages coalesced under Mwakwasa
				Kanyaka ('Mwambata')	Kyemo	Younger brothers of Lupando	Kanyaka	Very, very small. Old men have moved to one side
		Mwakabala		Mwanga	Kiyala			
		Mwakipule		Mwambungu ('Kaka')	Kabala			Mwakabala 'came out' here
III	Mwambungu I (son of Mwalipopo I)		Mwambungu ('Mwambungu')		IGEMBE	Senior village of Mwambungu. Sons of Mbugu	Mwambungu	Mwambungu I 'came out' here. 'Mwambungu' in the ground (headman) in the country. Was driven out and later fetched back
	Mwambungu II (younger brother and heir of Mwambungu I)			Kaimbo		'Younger brothers and a few sons of Igembe.' Mwambungu's own son built here	Mwambungu (no separate title appointed)	33 men. Established after the coming out of Mwambungu I. Strictly a section of Igembe. 'Bakwisi' and 'bakwisi' generations III and IV. Some were contemporaries in Mbugu
			Nama	Luganda			Nama	Fama was driven out, later fetched back. Aided for Mwambungu in his absence. Luganda has a small sub-division, Suki.
			Kabala ('Mwambata')	Ipona		Younger than sons of Igembe. Sons of Sukaka and Sukaka	Kabala	30 members. Took over land from Sukaka. They 'came out' when very young men. Includes a Christian woman under Akima

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Nyakya

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VILLAGES IN NWAIFOPO'S CHIEFDOM (1938)—contd.

Generation	Chief	Sub Chief	Senior Headman	Headman	Village	Category	Legal Authority	Remarks
III	Mwankwa II	Mwankwa	Kakuja		Nkongoti	Younger brothers of Iporu	Kabole, Mwankibingwa (appointed by Kabole) settles small disputes	29 members 27 married. One informant suggested that Nkongoti might be established as a village of the next generation at the 'coming out' of Mwankwa. Others regard it as a generation III and strictly a section of Iporu. Its members include junior sons of Mwankwa II
					Kiwa		Kabole (no separate leader appointed)	At present a section of Iporu. May possibly be established as a village of generation IV
				Mwankilaka	Kibondo (junior section)	Sons of Kibondo	Mwankilaka tries small cases. Others to Mwankiputa	
					NJERI	Second senior village of Mwankwa. Sons of Lapanda	Kakuja	
				Mwankilaka ('Mwankwa')	Nyanga	Younger sons of Lapanda	Mwankilaka	
				Mwankibondo ('Mwankilaka')	Iaka	Youngest sons of Lapanda	Mwankibondo	Mwankibondo had moved on account of a quarrel. He was recently brought home
				Mwankiputa	Lakwaka	Sons of Kibole		
				Kaku	Nkoto	Sons of Kabole		

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VILLAGES IN MWAIPOPO'S CHIEFDOM (1936)—contd.

Generation	Chief	Sub Chief	Senior Headman	Headman	Village	Category	Legal Authority	Remarks
IV	Mwanyilu (about 10 years old)			None yet appointed as Mwanyilu has not yet come out	Mpagano	Sons of Igembe	Mwambuputa	'Mwanyilu will come out here'
				"	Nanga	Younger sons of Igembe and Lugombo	Mwambuputa	'Mwanyilu will build here first'
				"	Itinga	Sons of Njoni and Mponga	Small cases to Mwakatika. Serious cases to Kakuju	Some members are married
				"	Ipyana	Younger brothers of Itinga	"	None yet married
				"	Kungwe	"	"	None yet married
				"	Isaba (junior section)	Sons of Isaba		

Nineteen independent villages established at the 'coming out' ceremonies of Mwaifonga, Mwaipopo and Mwankuga survive. There are five village sections treated in some respects as practically independent villages. There are other village sections as Itiki which are not so independent. There are six boys' villages, not yet established, but likely to be recognized at the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu. The dividing line between village and village section is difficult to determine when villages have split after the 'coming out' at which they have been established, as did Bujanga. Our recognition of Bunkali as a separate village and not Itiki is somewhat arbitrary.

It is to be noted that villages not only sub-divide but occasionally coalesce. Two independent villages established at the 'coming out' of Mwaipopo coalesced as Lwanda, after the death of the headman of one of them.

The traditional organisation is modified in that Mwaifonga's country has not been divided or sub-divided into independent chiefdoms.

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Nyakyusa

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[p. 185]

2. THE 'COMING OUT' (UBUSOKA)

Mwaihambo (clerk and son of a chief).¹

621 "The village headmen begin to talk among themselves, saying: "Our
622 sons have grown up, should we not establish them?" So they go to tell
643 the chief, saying: "Our sons have grown up, let us show them to the
country." Two chiefs always "come out". We call them the senior
and the junior. It is an old custom which is still followed that two
chiefs should "come out".

[789] "So the village headmen seek a doctor to make them a medicine
horn and treat the tails of chieftainship with medicine. The village
headmen take council together and choose two senior headmen to
"come out" with the chiefs. These senior headmen drink medicine
(*embondanya*) with the chiefs.

[535] "When many people, together with the two young chiefs, have come
together the doctor gives powdered medicine (*embondanya*) to the
chiefs and the senior headman chosen for each chief. They give a spear
of chieftainship, and a horn, and tail to each of the men chosen as
senior headmen—one for each chief. Each senior headman then binds
the horn to the blade of the spear, and standing with his own chief and
many men and women, raises the spear to the sky. The women trill
and each party goes to its place of "coming out" on the pasturage.
Each chief, with his followers, goes to his own place. The men dance;
sometimes they have drums, sometimes not.

[372] "Then when each party has reached its own place they make fire with
fire sticks. The chief just simulates the action of fire-making then his
senior headman takes the sticks and makes fire by friction. When they
have built the shelters for sleeping in they warm themselves at the
fire they have made; they do not take fire from the houses of men. If
there are many of them then there will be three or four shelters, if
few, then only one shelter. The men and their chief who has "come
out" sleep in these shelters and enjoy themselves together (*nukwan-
gala*). The first day they kill two head of cattle. Also they plant "the
tree of coming out" (*umpiki gwa busoka*) which is called *ulupando*.
They plant it with a man who has come out previously, a man of their
fathers' generation, he begins to plant, then he explains to them what
to do, saying "plant", then the new senior headman plants it.

"While they sleep in these shelters with their cattle, they eat food
which they take from their fathers, bananas, and milk, and other food.

¹ For a note on conspicuous informants see p. vi.

35. JOINT RESPONSIBILITY OF NEIGHBOURS

Mwai kambo (clerk).

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837 'In former times people did not live at peace as we do now. Because they fought frequently they never were friendly with those of other villages as they are to-day. The occasion for beginning a fight was usually a dispute over women or cattle. If a man had made love to a woman of another village he got a friend to steal her for him. Then if the "owners" of the woman saw them they told their chief that men of such and such a village had run off with "their wife". Their chief allowed all his people to go to recapture "their wife". Also those who had stolen the woman told their chief that they had a case against them, they had stolen someone's wife. Then the chief replied that they should tell everyone to be ready.'

Mwamgwanda (old pagan man).

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685 'In the old days if one man A, had "eaten" the cow of another, B, living in a different chiefdom, and failed to repay it, though B came frequently to claim his cow, and if the wife of a village neighbour of A visited in B's country, B might seize her and take her to his chief, saying: "This woman is the wife of C, a neighbour of A, who has 'eaten' my cow." Then the chief sent to the chief of A's country, saying that they had caught the wife of C and they wanted the cow due from A. Then A would send the cow and B would send back the wife of C with a bull to say: "Thank you, you have settled my case." Then the husband, C, might demand a hoe as well. If A denied his debt when the message came, and asserted that B's friends had seized the woman without cause, his chief would send him to B's chief, saying: "My man denies the charge. Let them drink *umwasi*." Then A and B would take the ordeal in B's country.'

36. MOVING

Mwanjala.

'Lukama's father had built in the country of the chief, Mwaikuju, and Lukama moved and went to the country of Mwasyika. He returned to Mwaikuju's of his own accord, and when he had been there a considerable time his wife fell ill, so he moved again to Mwasyika's. After three months his fellows came to fetch him, and they put him into his own old house. They told him to choose whether he would go to his own old homestead, or to another, and of his own accord he chose to build on another site, but he occupied his own old house temporarily. After a year and a half had passed, his wife fell very ill again, and he went to Mwasyika's. He had been there a month when his fellows—those from his other age-village (in Mwaikuju country)—came to fetch him. They put him into another man's house and he lived with him there. He ate his own food for he was the owner of the homestead—a stranger eats of the bananas of strangers. After he had been there some time, but before he had built a house, his wife fell ill again, and he went to Mwasyika's country where he is still.'

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In reply to a question: 'It is customary to fetch a man who has moved because people mostly move on account of illness. Hence, the man's fellows say: "If we do not fetch him it appears as if it were we who had driven him away, as if we had done that which caused him to move."'

Kimbolela.

'Mwapefya moved and went to Mwankenja's country. He moved on account of his own illness. Before he had been away long his fellows (i.e. village neighbours) went to fetch him. He was only away perhaps four or five months. When they brought him back they put him into his old house, for no one had taken it. He took his food from where he had cultivated previously, for as he had not been away long there were still sweet potatoes in his field. He came the first time they went to fetch him.'

Details from various informants, in reply to a question about three new huts being built.

'Three young men have just moved from the village of Mwafula to the village of Mwamunda, because someone had accused them, saying

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37. FETCHING HOME A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL

Iloilo village, 19/9/37.

166 Five young men ran past our house (which was on the main village
street), carrying mats and calabashes.

● 621 Angombwike: 'They have gone to fetch one of Porokoto's men who
had moved elsewhere. A son of Porokoto (the chief) went with the
others to fetch him back. That is as if the chief had gone himself; he
loves him. It is customary for people to seize the mats of the man who
has moved. If he objects they do not agree to his objections. They say:
"You have spent time here. Let's be off!" They just snatch his mats.
The man who has moved agrees and tells them to go, he will follow,
and he comes later.

'When he comes they put him in a house where he stays for two or
three days; then he asks: "How about a home, friends?" Then they
point out a homestead to him. If he does not like it he refuses it and
they agree and tell him to choose one for himself, which he does.

'But if he does not agree to come perhaps he sends a son to build
here; perhaps he comes but after he has spent two or three days he
says: "I am going; I want to return to where I was, so he goes."

'When they go to fetch a man they always run off with his mats.'

[p. 270]

38. BRINGING HOME A VILLAGE HEADMAN

Mwambuputa's home-coming

Mwambuputa is the senior headman of Mwankuga who had fled to the Lake-shore plain from fear of 'the breath' of his men (cf. pp. 229-30). He was brought back with ceremony. His return also brought to a head an old land dispute (cf. pp. 188-90). For the status of the personalities concerned consult the table of villages and headmen on pp. 181-5.

Record of G. W., 1/5/35.

'I visited Tandale (Mwainyobolela) the village headman of Busikali and the man chosen to bury chiefs. Katolile (the village headman by inheritance of Bujenga, and a brother of Jane, Kasitile's wife) turned up with two others to fetch him to the home-coming of Mwambuputa (Mwafungo)¹ in Igembe. We picked up Kikalango (a junior son of the chief Mwaipopo) on the way and he and Tandale told me the following story:

"Mwambuputa went to the Lake-shore plain (MuNgonde). Then Mwankuga I (the young chief), while he was still alive, found a cow and the village headmen went off with it to fetch Mwambuputa home. Mwankuga did not go himself. This cow was kept by Mwambuputa, not eaten. It was to say to him; 'Come back, my headman.' Then Mwambuputa agreed and said: 'I will return, take my son back with you now.' So they came back. Then Mwankuga I died, and Mwambuputa came up to his funeral and put up temporary huts to live in, and he has not since been back to MuNgonde. Yes, he could have built proper houses before this ceremony, had he wished, it is not forbidden."

"Those who come to this gathering are his fathers (i.e. the men of Mwaipopo) and his friends (i.e. the men of Mwankuga), all commoners—no chiefs come to this ceremony. And in fact neither Mwaipopo nor Mwankuga II was there, nor did I see any of Mwaipopo's brothers. Kikalango and Kititu (junior sons of Mwaipopo) came to accompany me. We arrived at Mwambuputa's huts with Ngulyo, about noon. About 100 men were present. I noticed Mwambuputa himself, Kakuju, Ngulyo, Tandale, Katotile, and Mwaseba (Kabolile).

¹ Some informants used the name 'Mwambuputa', others 'Mwafungo'. To avoid confusion we use only the former.

602 is forgotten he will be angry: 'It happens sometimes that a kins-
763 man comes in later, after the man is buried, and is very angry
because no message was sent to him; he comes in a passion, and
perhaps he beats his brother [the one who should have sent him a
message]. Then the others catch hold of him and say: "Why do
you not come soberly and greet us decently with the appropriate
words? Come now, why?" And if he does not stop they beat him.'

602 These kinsmen and affines, with their wives and children, are
764 under obligation to come to the burial, unless they are sick. Young
children under the age of 10 or 11 are not obliged to come, though
they often do, but older children must do so. One reason for the
continuance of the burial ceremonies for three or four days is that
this gives time for relatives from a distance to receive the messages
and come. Deliberately to refuse to send a message or, on the
[578] other side, to refuse to come to a burial for no good reason, is a
symbolic breaking of the bond of kinship and no one ever does
either, unless there is a serious quarrel and all economic and social
relations are being broken off between the two families concerned.

• 621 The village neighbours also are obliged to come to every burial
764 in the village. They normally wish to do so, but, even if they do
577 not, they still come for shame or for fear of being accused of witch-
craft if they stay away. Where there is friendship the neighbours
come in grief and sympathy and quarrels are softened by the
fact of death, but, if the memory of enmity still persists, then the
last sanctions are shame and fear: 'Some people mourn more
than others.' 'The men who knew him say: "Let us go and
mourn him." ' 'Those who did not know him intimately mourn
because each thinks: "He has died, my neighbour, and so will it
be with me one day." ' 'If I have quarrelled with my neighbour
and he dies, I go to his burial for I say to myself: "It is true that
while he lived we quarrelled, but now he is dead and we shall never
meet again. I too will go to his burial and mourn him." ' 'If a
village neighbour does not come to a burial we say he is unkindly
and unsociable.' 'And if a man does not go to his neighbour's
burial then at once people say: "It was you who bewitched him.
Why else do you not come to bury him?" ' Several of the accusa-
tions of witchcraft recorded had been occasioned by a man's ab-
sence from a village neighbour's funeral. For it is believed that
witches are chary of going to the burials of their victims lest the
dead should rise and denounce them.

643 A chief normally goes to all burials in his own country, except
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misfortune and the rituals are distinct. In theory, when the shades⁵⁷⁸ are angry the essential offering is that made in the sacred banana⁷⁷⁵ grove or on the hearth; it is eaten by the grandsons of the most⁷⁸³ recently dead, and whether neighbours partake or not depends upon the generosity of the officiant; whereas when neighbours are angry there is no offering in the grove or at the hearth, the neighbours are feasted, admit anger and express forgiveness.

However, neighbours are slow to admit responsibility (for to⁷⁸⁹ curse someone comes close to witchcraft) and in some cases there is both a formal feast for the neighbours and a prayer to the shades, and it is left uncertain where final responsibility rests. The following texts illustrate this:

MWAIKAMBO: It is the custom among us Nyakyusa to marry many⁵⁹⁵ wives, mature ones and young ones, so if a man has sons at his home it⁸³⁷ sometimes happens that one of them makes love to one of his father's wives. Perhaps they commit adultery in secret, perhaps he runs off with her to a distant chiefdom. Then the father breaks off relations with him.

The son, wherever he is, learns that he has been cursed by his father⁵⁹³ and his body becomes like goose flesh. If the son is wise he gathers his⁷⁸⁹ property and returns to his father. He takes a friend with him and goes⁷⁸³ into the house of one of his father's neighbours. His friend and his⁶²¹ father's neighbour speak together. 'I have come to return unto my father because I have done wrong.' He tells the neighbour what they have brought to offer the father—usually a cow and a bull. Then that neighbour seeks three comrades or perhaps four or five, and they go to pacify their irate fellow, saying: 'Our child has returned. He knows that he has done wrong towards you, but we have received him because he has confessed humbly and begged forgiveness.' His father refuses furiously and almost spears himself in his passion. His fellows pacify him for the whole day, or perhaps two or three days, then at last he agrees. Then the young man and his fellows bring the cow and the bull. The father also calls together many of his fellows and he seeks beer and⁵⁹³ cooks food. They gather together at the father's homestead and the⁷⁸⁹ father says: 'My son has come and admitted that he has done wrong.⁷⁸³ asking that I forgive him and saying: 'I did not know what I was doing, these are the cattle which I have brought', and the others agree. Then they kill the bull. They roast some meat. The father catches one side of it, the son the other and the village headman cuts it in the middle, and the father and son each eat their piece. This is the blessing (*ulusajo*), meaning that there is kinship between them now. They eat together. Then all the people eat. Also with the beer it is like this. The village headman picks a straw and puts it in the beer, hands it to the father who drinks, and then to the son. Then other people drink, and they

cited a case she had seen in which the doctor smeared the child with medicine and beer, and the mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law of the erring woman drank the beer and said: 'All right.' T. (a Christian woman) quoted another case:

One of my mother's co-wives swore at her mother-in-law. . . . When she bore a child it was very thin and ill, so they sought a doctor, and beat the mother and she confessed all she had said in swearing at my grandmother, her mother-in-law. She and the child were treated by the doctor and when her father saw that the child did not recover quickly he brought a cow in payment . . . it is still at my home. From that time the child recovered. If anyone says there is no such thing as the illness of *ingoto* they lie because I have seen it with my own eyes.¹

When a junior comes to beg pardon of a senior it is the business of the latter's neighbours to persuade him to receive the prodigal. That was indicated in Mwaikambo's account quoted above and reaffirmed by Mwakwelebeja who cited the case of his wife's father, a youngest brother, who had run off with three of his eldest brother's widows allocated to the middle brother, *after* they had been smeared with ash and the heir had slept with them.

When they had performed the death ritual and finished it and the widows had slept with the heir in the house and had taken the *ilibalaga* to their fathers, . . . then three of the widows ran off with the younger brother. He fled with them to Masoko and to the hills, where he lived a long time and begot children with them. Then later on he brought 'the cow of the ashes (*inombe ja mfwandelo*)' to return to his senior brother. The senior received it and killed it and poured out beer. We ate.

QUESTION: Do people not refuse to receive such a cow, sometimes?

MWAKWELEBEJA: No, they fear to do so, they fear people, because the wrongdoer has come to them and it is they, the neighbours, who tell the senior kinsman: 'He has come, forgive him.' If the senior refuses they will be angry with him. Also we tell him: 'See, that man has strength to beget children with these women, you will eat the cattle.' Then he agrees and says: 'Let us make friends.'

The illness that falls on a widow who rejects the heir after being smeared with the ash is 'like a curse from the ash'. Her lover, 'if he is strong and has medicines he will escape, but if he is not strong he will fall ill . . . because he takes men's lips with him [i.e. suffers from their breath].'

¹ A third case, in which the beer was brought to the woman's husband, is quoted in *Good Company*, p. 236.

782 has been a quarrel in the family, those members of the lineage
602 who have been at variance must attend and share the meat or
beer, and bless one another. Grandchildren, 'comrades of the
shades', must eat the offering left overnight in the banana grove.

593 If a son has quarrelled with his father and comes to beg pardon
● 621 the father calls his *neighbours* who must be present and partake of a
783 feast and bless the young men. 'If father and son just agree with
one another and people do not eat anything, then the son will not
be settled in well.'

585 At a puberty-marriage ritual the principals are the nubile girl
881 and her father or brother, her husband, and sometimes her mother
602 or mother-in-law. A mother goes through the ritual with her
eldest son's wife, or with her eldest daughter, if she is initiated at
home. At an ordinary birth the principals are the mother and
infant.

764 Besides these principals who undergo the full ritual there are
602 many minor actors. At a funeral there are the grave-diggers who,
621 traditionally among the Nyakyusa, were mature men, relatives or
village neighbours.¹ They wash after the burial and are rewarded
with a special leg of the funeral beef. As we have seen, the affines
(*abako*), that is the fathers-in-law and sons-in-law of the deceased
or of 'the owner of the funeral', come with cattle to kill or cloth.
When a woman dies, her husband and her father, or her brother,
kill cattle, and their affines bring cloths or, occasionally, cattle.
Kinsmen—members of the lineage and their wives—and neigh-
bours bring gifts of food to cook for the crowd of mourners, and
small gifts of millet which are presented to the shade and used for
making the ritual beer. After an abnormal birth, village neigh-
845 bours have their legs splashed with scalding medicine but do not
621 drink medicines or shave. The cattle of the village are also
splashed. At the puberty ritual the bride's maids keep her com-
881 pany during her seclusion. The co-wives and neighbours of her
621 mother and mother-in-law assist in instructing her, and the neigh-
602 bours of her father join with him first in avoiding her and then in
giving her gifts. Her father-in-law is identified with his brothers
and his father's brothers' sons, whom she avoids, as well as his
sisters, and her mother-in-law's brothers, and sisters' husbands.
They, in turn, avoid her sisters, as well as herself/

621 By the 'congregation' we mean those who attend rituals to ex-
788 press sympathy, and whose presence is felt to be necessary to the

¹ In Ngonde they are *abatani*, cross-cousins.

THE PARTICIPANTS

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success of the ritual, but who do not play any specially defined part. As we have seen, all who are reckoned kinsmen and all fellow villagers must attend a funeral, and a large crowd enhances the status of the deceased. At a puberty and marriage ritual the 'congregation' is much smaller but is nevertheless important, as is shown by the complaint of the girl marrying a Christian that if she were not initiated she would not be famed. At other rituals all who attend are actors.

The officiants (*abayago*) for death, puberty and marriage, and birth rituals are almost always elderly women who, by their own choice, have learnt the medicines and observances from some older *ayago* by acting as her assistant. We came across only one man who acted as *ayago* in death and puberty rituals, though at the rituals of spearing, binding with ropes, and protection against sorcery men are more common than women. Often all the elderly women are referred to as '*abayago*' for 'they help the *ayago*', but the one who has been called upon to provide the medicines and organize the proceedings, and who is paid for her trouble, is clearly recognized. Sometimes she is a kinswoman of the 'owner' of the ritual—if a member of the lineage knows the medicines she will carry out the rituals for all her kin, as did Syungu, wife of Chief Porokoto's half-brother—but she is not necessarily a relative. It is knowledge, not kinship connections, that qualify her. She is the final arbitrator on procedure, and is insistent on exact observance of the details. Because knowledge of medicines is so important Nyakyusa often refer to the officiant at a ritual as *ayanga*, a doctor, but *ayago* is the more precise word since *ayanga* has other applications.

On the occasion of prayer in sickness, and in the ritual of reconciliation, no specialist *ayago* is necessary. The senior kinsman of a lineage prays to his shades direct, and a father and his neighbours receive and bless an erring son without the mediation of any priest; but the doctor called in to treat a sick man may press the kinsmen to confess their anger and bless one another (as Mwaki-ondo did in the case quoted) and come very close to organizing a ritual of reconciliation.

At a marriage ritual there is a 'go-between' (*amfuyi*) representing the bride's father and one representing the groom, and, besides their legal function as witnesses to the pamage of cattle, they help the officiant to organize the ritual, and are specifically responsible for conveying invitations to the feasts. The wife of the groom's 'go-

585 between' accompanies 'the mothers-in-law' when they go to in-
duct or instruct the bride, and the wife of her father's 'go-between'
is one of the group of mothers which takes the bride to her hus-
band. The duties of a 'go-between' do not end at marriage: the
[85] groom's 'go-between' is responsible for taking to the bride's people
the hen to announce the birth of the first child, and, among the
Lugulu, the 'go-between' of the father is master of ceremonies at
the ritual of vituperation.

789 The ideas that emerge from this analysis are, that in the *protec-*
602 *tive* rituals—after death, twin birth, spearing, binding with ropes,
and death from sorcery—the parents, children, grandchildren, and
some siblings, and siblings' children of the person primarily
affected undergo the ritual. Links through females as well as
males are recognized—daughters' children as well as sons' child-
ren attend—but they are not traced so far, and a brother's or half-
brother's children attend far more often than a sister's children.
Moreover, children of an unrelated co-wife perform the death
ritual for a woman rather than her sister's children.

593 Wives always attend rituals in which their husbands are con-
cerned—indeed, they often come with their children when their
husbands stay away—but when the wife is concerned as a sister or
daughter, her husband never accompanies her.

593 The closest relatives, such as own children, children of the heir
602 or of a related co-wife, and proximate full siblings, must *all* parti-
cipate, but the more distant relatives select representatives.

602 The range of relations concerned varies with the particular
ritual—it is widest in the twin ritual and narrowest for an ordinary
birth—and is also modified by proximity, for relatives who live
near come when those in the same category living twenty miles
away do not.

Affines (*abals*) never perform a ritual together even when they
are next-door neighbours and close friends, but *abals* in one
generation are *abipus* (mother's kin) in the next, and a man and
his *abipus* can participate together, as in the protection against
sorcery described. More often, however, the members of each
lineage act separately.

602 Our Nyakyusa informants distinguished the officiants—*abeyaga*
•621 —from those undergoing a ritual but they did not make distinc-
613 tions of the sort attempted here between principals and kin who
do not undergo the ritual. The distinctions they drew were be-
tween kinamen and neighbours and between lineages. At a death

THE PARTICIPANTS

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ritual they distinguish *abakamu* (kinsmen) from *abandu itole* (non-relatives) or *abakapanga* (villagers), and *abakile* (those of the lineage of a dead man) from *abake* (affines) and mother's relatives (*abipua*). These categories have different functions.

(b) Christians

The performance of family rituals is complicated by the fact that 16 per cent of the Nyakyusa are professing Christians, and in almost every lineage there are individuals who withdraw from the full performance of traditional rituals at death, puberty, and marriage, birth, and misfortune. In most cases such a withdrawal is treated tolerantly by the pagan kinsmen: the Christian kinsmen come to mourn, to congratulate the bride, to express sympathy with the parents of twins; and their non-participation in the washing and shaving and avoidance of ritual meat and beer is accepted. At the funeral of Mwamulenga his preceding full brother, who should have been a principal in the death ritual, was a Christian, and he took no part, though his children went through it. At the funeral of Mwampiki (p. 248) one boy was left untreated on the ground that he was a Christian and a Christian 'should not have two gods'. At the puberty ritual of Mwaihojo's daughter (p. 91) the brother called to wash with her was influenced by Christians and was reluctant to take part, though he finally did so.

Only when a son who is heir to family wealth, or to the office of chieftainship or priesthood refuses the inheritance of widows (as a Christian must do) is there very strong pressure on him to conform to traditional custom: the union of the heir with the widows is held essential to their health. Sometimes also there is acute conflict between different members of the family over the performance of an autopsy, the pagans pressing for it and the Christians opposing it. This we saw in the death of E. when her pagan senior brother wished to examine her, and her Christian junior brother opposed him vehemently.

That Christians cannot take part in certain of the rituals¹ and do not suffer if they omit them is generally accepted. The farewell to the dead at the homestead of the deceased, and the treatment of kinsmen of twins, fall into this category. About certain other rituals, such as the ritual of the gasping cough and the protection against sorcery, opinions are divided. Some of our Christian friends insisted that 'the gasping cough is a real illness' and cited

¹ There are minor differences in the rules of the different missions.

500 RITUALS OF KINSHIP AMONG THE NYAKYUSA

431 between the groom's lineage and that of the bride during the puberty-marriage ritual.

431 Within a lineage, also, there is some circulation of property. A
613 young man is provided with marriage-cattle by his father, or father's heir; a father kills a cow at his son's funeral, a son does likewise for his father; and if a son offends his father he begs pardon with a gift. A daughter is given a gift by her father at the close of the puberty ritual, and he or his heir kills a cow at her funeral.

431 Village neighbours are closely identified with the father, and
● 621 feast on the bull of puberty and the offering provided by an erring son, and give gifts to a daughter when she reaches maturity.

431 Kinmen and neighbours are expected to help provide food, and firewood on which to cook it, for the guests at a funeral or marriage or at a twin-birth ritual. On the first day of a funeral guests are fed on food provided by the bereaved household, on the following day on that provided by their kinmen, and on the third day on that provided by the village neighbours. Before the marriage-cattle are brought for his daughter, a man asks his kinmen and immediate neighbours to help him cook for 'the husbands'—not to ask for such help is unfriendly. Kinmen and neighbours also bring gifts of millet at a funeral and after an abnormal birth, which is used for brewing the ritual beer.

(4) *The symbolism of participation and exchange*

431 What is implied by undergoing a ritual or offering gifts? Partici-
602 pation in a ritual implies close kinship. We see, in the rituals performed after death, or spearing, or binding with ropes, the unity of the group composed of parents, children, grandparents, and siblings; the acknowledgement of a closer link between some siblings than between others; a recognition that wives are of 'one blood' with their husbands; and a separation between kinmen and affines who are of another blood. In the twin ritual the limits of recognized kinship are expressed by participation and in the death ritual they are expressed by attendance. Observance of the taboo of avoidance, like attendance at rituals, is taken as evidence of kinship.

554 The difference in the status of senior and junior wives, and of
602 eldest and junior daughters and sons, also appears in the rituals at puberty and marriage and at death. The unity between living and dead agnatic kin and, in a lower degree, mother's kin, is ex-

686 shades usually do, and I shall wander a long time on the way to the land of the shades because I shall have no relatives to show me the way. And then when I get there I shall still have trouble. They will drive me away from them, and I shall live alone, apart from them, quite separate.

775 More rarely a shade is said to be angry because his grave has
764 been left unswept, or he has not been buried where he asked to be.

621 The kinds of behaviour believed to be punished by 'the breach
681 of men' are very similar to those thought to be punished by the anger of senior kinsmen; and, indeed, as we have seen, kinsmen and neighbours may murmur together against a son who has seduced his father's wife, a girl who has behaved insultingly to her parents-in-law, either verbally or by a breach of avoidance, and an heir who has neglected his wards or has neglected the customary ritual for his father, more particularly the customary killing of a cow when he enters into his inheritance. It is said that neglect to provide them with certain customary feasts infuriates neighbours more than anything else.¹

The misfortunes that threaten from the neglect of rituals, and from the anger of kinsmen and neighbours, are loss of sanity, of life or health or fertility; a difficult labour or a lingering death; repeated miscarriages; loss of beauty (a wicked woman goes bald or turns reddish); scanty crops or sick herds, or, nowadays, unemployment—the man whose father is angry does not find a job. Only rarely is it suggested that punishment may be postponed until after death and then what is feared is that the shades of the lineage will not receive their kinsman.

775 When Nyakyusa talk about their religion they speak mostly of
771 external things, of the rituals, of the angry words spoken by kinsmen or neighbours and of the fearful effects upon one against
683 whom this anger is directed. Misfortune is said to be brought down on a man by his parents murmuring in anger over the fire, by people murmuring against him (the word used is that for the humming of a hive of bees). The emphasis is on outspoken complaint or criticism. But it is also thought that 'the shades see what is within a man': if he stuns one wife of fish, then 'even though the woman herself has not said anything, the shades hear the thought of the belly'. Sleeplessness and an uneasy mind are taken as evidence of the anger of the shades or the attacks of witches.

¹ cf. Monica Wilson, *God Gospel*, pp. 107-8.

577 There is much more talk among the Nyakyusa of misfortune
777 from the shades or the anger of neighbours, than of blessing, but
584 there is an idea, somewhat vague but real, that generosity and
kindliness will bring blessing (*akasi*). Ambilikile, a Christian
teacher who had grown up in a 'pagan home, said:

My mother tells me that my father was in the habit of feeding people, those who were not his relatives. People went to a distance and brought medicines for fertility and gave them to him, hence they said: 'He is very kind; food never grows short at his home.' She also told me that my father died very old. He did not die of disease, but of old age, no breath being left in him. This was because men were always saying: 'May they stand by him, may they bless him (*amwamwaleye, bawajeye*),' not to his face but to others. They said that he lived long because of the blessing of men. Yes, they say that the food of a kindly man never gets finished, that of a stingy man finishes; he himself suffers hunger.

763 Mwaimuna described a father on his death-bed blessing a favourite son, allocating cattle to him, and telling him:

Care for the children I have left, keep on good terms with them, then you will be rich in everything like your father. I cared for my children, I was not harsh (*akali*), so complain to me of anything that troubles you. If you are like this the property in your home will be plentiful, people will be astonished and say: 'He is like his father.'

431 Of a man given a cow by the chief, it was sometimes said: 'The
775 shades have blessed him; he has a righteous (*agilefo*) shade.'

734 Although our Nyakyusa informants talked a great deal about
671 the danger of neglecting rituals and angering senior relatives,
641 living and dead, the number of cases of misfortune attributed to their anger is small in comparison with the number attributed to witchcraft or 'the breath of men'. (Ten as compared with sixty-three.) There is no reason to suppose that one type of case was concealed when the others were reported to us, and it is clear that the Nyakyusa prefer to make neighbours in the age-village, rather than kinsmen, the scapegoat for their misfortunes. Even when the wrong done is against a kinsman it is often the neighbours, rather than the shades, who are said to have brought punishment on the wrong-doer.

777 At the same time, we were assured by one informant after another that people blame the shades or Kyala for misfortune when
621 it is really the neighbours who are responsible! Angombwike argued that men fear to accuse the neighbours, who are slow to

admit their anger, and prefer to blame the shades and conciliate the neighbours by feasting. For example:

When someone is ill of a curse the owners of the village do not agree that it is they who have bewitched him. No, that is what others say. . . . When they bless such a person they pray to the shades. As, for example, with M. [informant's father, a wealthy man]. If he falls ill with a disease of the legs, and goes to a diviner, and the diviner says: 'They have bewitched you,' then he goes home and seeks a bull and calls the men of the village, saying: 'Let us enjoy ourselves with this bull.' They say: 'Is it the legs?' He denies it, saying: 'No, I am just giving you something to eat, something with which to enjoy ourselves.' They say: 'Are you a chief to feast us on a bull?' He says: 'I just thought I would like to enjoy myself with you.' He conceals the cause because if he speaks of the illness they will say: 'Ha, he is catching us for witchcraft.' They eat, and at the beer they say: 'You, M., take this stick and stand up. Walk!' And when they go home each prays to his shades, saying: 'Stand by him, may he recover from his sickness!'

In short, the Nyakyusa speak of the danger of angering senior relatives, but they attribute most of their misfortunes to their neighbours, and they say that more misfortunes are due to neighbours and fewer to the shades than is openly admitted!

Perhaps the most striking feature of the family cult among the Nyakyusa is the narrowness of its range. Neighbours are concerned with the fulfilment of family obligations as well as obligations to themselves, but the shades are concerned solely with behaviour between kinsmen. 'If I wrong a kinsman I fear the shades, but not if I wrong another.'

Nyakyusa

to

PEOPLES OF THE LAKE NYASA REGION

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of the new area. Their culture differs from that of the indigenous tribes, so that they remain largely unassimilated. The cause of the exodus is partly shortage of land;¹ the Nyakyusa are skilled cultivators; the active soil-conservation campaigns promoted by the Agricultural Department in Bangwe district involved farmers in additional effort, so that land in Mbera was attractive in so far as the soil conservation scheme only started there two years later. The main motive, however, was to shorten the transport haul between the farmer and the market at Loza. The demand for supplies of beans and grain from Bangwe district was decreasing even before the 1939 war, partly because production on the goldfields was declining, and partly because the produce of Mbera district was increasing (largely through the work of the immigrant Nyakyusa farmers). The main problems for the administration arising from the Nyakyusa immigration into Mbera district is the lack of control by the Native Authorities and congestion in the river valleys. The Ntsoa, who wanted the valleys of the Naeve and Mbalali rivers after their wars with the Bangwe, retreated into the hills before the flood of Nyakyusa immigrants, who now populate the valleys almost exclusively with their own compact endogenous groups.²

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

KINSHIP AND LOCAL GROUPING

62!

56!

(The following section is compiled from information applying equally to Nyakyusa and Ngondo.)

The distinctive feature of the social organization is the system of age-villages. An age-village consists of a male age-group with wives of any age and children. When a man dies his heir may come to live in his village, and strangers applying for land are never refused on grounds of age, but the original constitution of the village is based on the principle of identity of age. Up to the age of ten years the small boys herd cattle in groups. Then they start to hoe for their fathers, and leave their fathers' houses to go to sleep with friends. After two or three years they build for themselves in an age-village of young men. They continue to hoe the fields and eat the food of their mothers until marriage, after which they hoe mainly for themselves, on land adjacent to their own hut.³

602

If a young man, instead of hoeing, goes out to work, he is expected to bring back tin-money for his father. By his service he earns the right to be given cattle for marriage. A young man whose father is poor in cattle will often attach himself to the household of a rich kinsman, brother of his father or mother, and hoe regularly for him, eventually receiving from him a large portion of his marriage cattle.⁴ Sons-in-law are expected to bring their friends now and again to hoe for their father-in-law, who will afterwards entertain the workers.⁵

[61]

Descent and inheritance are patrilineal, but there are no clans, and no descent group with a common name and definite membership.⁶ The sons of a group of affines kinsmen are not all themselves affines kinsmen, and in the third generation the bonds of kinship may often have been forgotten. Cattle exchanges signify the most

¹ Wilson, p. 195b, p. 9.
² Wilson, p. 195b, p. 18.
³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴ Ibid., 195b.
⁵ Ibid., p. 19.
⁶ Ibid., p. 195b, p. 187; p. 195b, p. 2.

622 and the great commoners of the most senior village. The constitution of a chiefdom
624 was that of a limited monarchy, for the chief was dependent on his great commoners
626 for his authority. All the way up the scale, with the exception of the Kpyungu himself,
each chief had his own great commoners and people directly subordinate to him. The
organization of families and villages within the chiefdom was the same as that of the
Nyangwena, but the organization of a territory ruled by a noble differed in that although
there were always at least two age-villages, there were no great commoners.¹

628 Villages vary in size, and average from forty to fifty households. In the first instance
630 a boys' village is built on ground allotted to them by the village of their fathers, but a
new allotment is made ceremoniously at the 'coming out', *shanda*, ceremony of the
young chiefs, when the old chief and his great commoners formally allot a tract of land
to each village of young men, and redraw the boundaries.

632 In every generation each chiefdom was divided into two (they were originally
634 immigrant groups expending their territory, and incorporating previous inhabitants).
The chief at his accession, or 'coming out', married two 'great wives', whose eldest
sons would each be one of his two heirs, and divide his chiefdom. The number of
villages which 'came out' with each young chief varied between four and eight. If he
was later reduced to a minor position he might be left with only one village of adult
men, and one of their sons, as people tended to move away from minor chiefdoms.
This was the custom which obtained among the Nyangwena and also among the Ngunda.²
A summary of the 'coming out' ritual is given here, instead of in the section on ritual,
as it indicates some of the features of the political organization.

636 Usually eight age-villages 'came out' at the same time, four under each of the young
638 chiefs. At this occasion, some thirty years after the old chief's accession, eight new
640 great commoners were chosen. The two young chiefs were secluded for a few hours
642 in the hut of the old chief's first wife, and received magical treatment. Then they
644 'came out'. The boundaries of the age-villages were loudly drawn. After the 'coming
646 out', each young chief, whether he was already married or not, married his two great
wives, whose first sons would be his heirs. Girls who had not yet reached puberty
were carried off from other chiefdoms with a show of force by the chief's men, who
later sent cover of their own to regularize the position. The girls stayed at the house
of one of the old chief's sons until their first menstruation. They were initiated together,
not at the house of their fathers, but in the country of their husbands; the old men
and women of the country (contemporaries of the retiring chief) played the part
usually played by the girl's parents and neighbours; the chief and his young men play-
ing the usual part of the husband and his friends. After the ceremony the girls were
given as wives to the young chiefs, and separate huts were built for them in the two
senior age-villages of the chiefdom. When married subsequently were attached in order
of seniority to one or other of the two 'sides' of the chiefdom. Thus the four age-villages
normally attached to a young chief were, from the first days of his official marriage,
divided into two. If one of the two great wives bore no sons, the succession for that
side of the chiefdom would pass to the son of the next senior wife of that side.

650 Between the 'coming out' of two young chiefs and the death of their own fathers, a
delicate balance of prestige and power was maintained, neither power over their own
age-villages passing to each young chief, while the old chief retained control over the

¹ Wilson, p. 147n, pp. 20-2.

² Ibid., p. 147n, pp. 20-2.

595 and children a man has to assist him the more wealth he can produce. The man and his unmarried sons hoe, his wives and young daughters plant, weed and harvest, fetch water, cut firewood and cook the food; and in other practical activities there is equally fruitful co-operation within the household group.

591
• 621
882 When a man marries he takes his wife from her father's village to his own where he lives with a group of contemporaries. Each village is in origin an age-group, formed by the sons of some village of adult men who leave home one by one as they reach the age of ten to twelve years and build together on ground set aside for them by their fathers. It is not decent, the Nyakyusa maintain, for a boy to sleep at home after any vigorous interest in sexual activity has awakened in him; and so, for the fifteen years or more between leaving home and marriage, he sleeps with bachelor friends in a boys' village. He and a group of friends go round in turn to the houses of their respective parents for meals, and each hoes his own parents' fields, but all return to the boys' village at night.

621
882
361 As the members of the boys' village grow older, younger boys just leaving home begin to be refused admittance to it and so either start a fresh village of their own nearby or else join a village of their own contemporaries which has already been started. Boys' villages are thus forever hiving off from the villages of men. At first a boys' village covers but little ground for, as its members are unmarried, the houses are small and close together and there are no garden lands attached to it. But as the young men marry one by one the village expands, houses are built bigger and farther apart and some adjacent ground is brought under cultivation, until at last it assumes the normal aspect of a village of adult men.

621 A village thus consists of a male age-group with wives and children attached. Wives may be of any age and there is no such formal age grouping among them as among the men. And, as time goes on, some men too may enter the village who are not exact contemporaries of its other members. When a man dies his heir, either a younger brother or a son, often comes to live in his village; nor are strangers who apply for land in a village ever, I think, refused on the ground of unsuitable age. Villages vary considerably in size but average forty to fifty households.

At first a village of boys, as we have said, is built on ground allotted to it by the village of their fathers; but a new allotment is made ceremonially at the "coming out" (*shumba*) of the young chiefs.

631
622 Every generation each chiefdom of the Nyakyusa is divided into two halves, a fact which is hard to understand until it is realized that the Nyakyusa consist of a number of immigrant groups which have, until very recently, been expanding their territory within the district and

incorporating the previous inhabitants. Now saturation point has been reached; their chiefdoms cover nearly all the available land and include in their membership all the indigenous people; and the custom of dividing chiefdoms into two is doomed. At the moment, however, it is still a vital part of their constitutional law. The division of a chiefdom is apparent from the moment that a ruling chief marries his two great wives, for he builds their houses separately, one in each "side" (*alabafa*) of his chiefdom. The son of each great wife inherits that side of the chiefdom in which his mother's house is built.

When the ruling chief begins to get old the two heirs are ceremonially "brought out" and recognized as chiefs, though they do not assume full powers until their father's death. And their "coming out" is also the "coming out" of all the young men, of all the boys' villages which have been built by the sons of the old chief's men. At the "coming out" each such village is formally given land by the old chief and his great-commoners, often in a new place.

In every village there is a headman whose title, *alifawa*, is simply a specialized use of the general term for a member of an old family who is not a chief. Every commoner is called an *alifawa* in his home chiefdom.¹ These two uses of the term I distinguish by calling the village headman a "great-commoner." Great-commoners, then, are selected for their wealth and ability by the older great-commoners of the chiefdom and hold office for life. In the boys' villages before the "coming out" they are chosen by the older great-commoners—those in charge of their fathers' villages—on that side of the chiefdom. If they prove satisfactory their appointments are confirmed by all the great-commoners of the old chiefdom at the "coming out," if not new ones are then selected.

At the "coming out" the young great-commoners are ritually treated with medicines to give them the power of witchcraft which they are expected to use in the interests of morality, while the young chiefs are treated with medicines to make them fierce and impressive themselves and to ensure the fertility of their land and the prosperity of the people under them.

Traditionally the young chiefs assumed authority, each in the young men's villages which composed his own new chiefdom, immediately after the "coming out" and in the old villages in one side of his father's chiefdom when his father died. To-day the position differs for the Administration does not recognize the young chiefs at all until their father is dead.

The separation of chiefdoms established at the "coming out" is often modified subsequently. In the old days brother chiefs frequently

¹ *Ibid.* vol. p. 22.

- 621 fought each other and one was sometimes reduced to a subordinate
622 position by the other. Such subordinate or minor chiefs did not always
lose all power, some men often continued to live with them, but not many,
for they were poor and could not afford the feasts that prosperous and
powerful chiefs gave to their warriors. Nowadays the junior of the two
young chiefs, in the majority of cases, becomes subordinate to his brother
immediately, for the Administration normally recognizes the senior of
the two only, and a salary is paid to him alone on the old chief's death.

[624] The number of villages which "come out" with each young chief
usually varies between four and eight. But if a chief is subsequently
reduced to a minor position he will often end his life with one village only
of adult men and one village of their sons. For people move from minor
chiefdoms and the depleted villages that are left gradually coalesce under
the leadership of one of the great-commoners. The son of a minor
chief may succeed to his father's position, but only one son will do so; a
minor chiefdom is too small to be divided and has no formal "coming
out" of its own; its young men attend the "coming out" of the
superior chiefdom.

621 So much in outline for the political constitution of the separate
423 Nyakyusa chiefdoms. Some account of it was a necessary preface to the
discussion of individual land rights, since it is within this political
structure that they have validity. If, for example, the boundaries of a
village are changed at the "coming out"—and they very frequently
are—then no individual rights to village land can be maintained outside
the new boundaries.

631 Prior to the arrival of the Europeans there was no paramount political
authority among the Nyakyusa, but a number of tiny independent chief-
doms side by side, with minor chiefdoms in some cases attached to them.
Of these traditionally independent chiefdoms there is none, I think,
which to-day exceeds 3,000 adult male members, and most of them are
far smaller than that. This smallness of scale, which is difficult at first
for a European to grasp, is the fundamental characteristic of primitive
society, in the organization of which personal relationships are predomi-
nant, wherein social relationships, that is, mainly subsist between personal
acquaintances. In the old Nyakyusa polity impersonal relationships,
effective social bonds linking together men who were personally unknown
to one another, though they existed had relatively little importance.

648 Just south of the Nyakyusa, in what is now North Nyasaland, live
184 the Ngonde¹ people, whose language and culture was and is very similar
to that of the Nyakyusa. They were, however, slightly more civilized in
that they were in closer contact with Arab and Swahili ivory traders; and

¹ Better known to Europeans as Konde.

166 witchcraft, which consists in the ability to translate evil impulses into
754 effective though immaterial actions and thus to cause sickness and death ;
but it is never clearly known who all these people are. And so the
coincidence of an obstinate illness with any quarrel or social tension of
any kind between neighbours gives rise to a suspicion that witchcraft is at
work. If the diviners support this theory then almost the only thing to
be done nowadays is to move and get out of range ; for witchcraft cannot
act at a distance. In the old days an alternative course of action was
[68] open to the sick man, he might identify the witch with the aid of the
mucfi ordeal and get him expelled from the chiefdom. Expulsions for
witchcraft still occur to-day, but only rarely, for the mucfi ordeal, the most
certain detector of witches, is no longer legal. There is, however, nothing
to prevent a man who thinks himself bewitched from moving. Now
this fact of constant movement is of the utmost importance in determining
the Nyakyusa system of land tenure since it tends to prevent the develop-
ment of any exclusive attachment to particular pieces of ground. And
the cause of this constant movement is mainly, though not entirely, the
fear of witchcraft.

For ordinary commoners only their immediate neighbours are
believed to be dangerous and sick men therefore sometimes move only
from one village to another of the same chiefdom ; but very many move
right outside to another chiefdom altogether, preferring to make assurance
doubly sure and to put a long distance between themselves and their
spiritual persecutors. And in the case of certain men of a high social
status, for whom a wider circle is dangerous, it is held to be quite essential
to leave the chiefdom.

166 I have no detailed statistics on moving but I estimate that, among
the pagan Nyakyusa, at least 80% of the married men have, at some time
or other, moved from the chiefdoms in which they first cultivated gardens
of their own. They may stay away for a few weeks only, they may stay
away for thirty years or they may never return at all. If, however, the
chiefdom from which they first moved is the one which they regard as
home then they usually do return to it in the end. A man's home chief-
dom is pre-eminently the one in which his father lives, or, if dead, spent
most of his life and is now buried. And this is normally the one in which
he himself also was born and brought up and in which he first took up
land.

166 When a man moves from his home chiefdom, his village neighbours
there, in the majority of cases, follow him within two months and ceremon-
621 ially invite him back with a show of force by seizing his belongings and
carrying them off home to his old village. They may really like and
respect him and if, as is usually the case, he has moved because of sick-

ness, they are most anxious to prove to him that his tacit suspicions are unfounded, they wish to rid themselves of the slur of witchcraft. To invite him back is to express affection for him and so to demonstrate that he could not have been bewitched for, see, everyone likes him!

Such an invitation is often, but by no means always accepted. If the man refuses the first time then the villagers may or may not go again later to ask him back; but if he was an important member of the village—the great-commoner, a noted doctor, the son of an old family—the invitations may go on being repeated for years; and he will then almost certainly return in the end. Whether or not he accepts a particular invitation depends again largely upon his own health and that of his family and upon his relations with his new neighbours at the time it is made. Sickness and suspected witchcraft, or quarrels and insults in the new village will incline him to go home. And a man can always return, even without an invitation, unless he was originally expelled for being himself a witch.

I asked a young man of Selya whether of those who moved from their home chiefdoms the majority came back again or not. "The majority do come back, only a few stay permanently away. Some move for better food, the great majority because they fall sick and wish to recollect themselves in the tranquillity of another chiefdom—this is the main reason for moving; but they come back in the end. Whenever a man is slighted in the country to which he has gone, whenever he falls sick there—back he goes home! For when he is slighted he remembers that in his own country he belongs to an old family and that it is not as if he had moved under suspicion of being a witch, he only moved because he fell sick, and now he will return home. A man does not lose his affection for home, for there is his sacred grove, his fathers' graves. But the real reason for returning is that in every other place a man is less respected than at home. He is made light of; but in his own country he is known to belong to an old family and is treated with great respect, his neighbours call to mind the days when he and they herded cows together as boys and the fact that his father is buried among them. That is why people go home again."

"And what of those who move to find better food?" I enquired.
"They come back too; if they are slighted in the place to which they have moved they come back home."

"For example there was a man who built here in the village of Igembe, he prospered greatly and his house was very long; we young men grew up to find him here and thought he was one of our own people, we had no idea that he belonged to Masoko. And then one day he was insulted, and immediately he moved and went home. He had lived with us for many, many years."

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166 In discussing the taking up of land after a move it is therefore
425 necessary to distinguish clearly between men who move to villages in
which they are newcomers and those who return, after a period of absence,
to their home villages.

166 Normally land for building and gardens is granted to a stranger by
425 the villagers concerned acting through their great-commoner, not by the
622 chief, who is usually informed but seldom interieres. Only if a member
624 of the chief's own family is moving within the chiefdom from one village
● 621 to another or if a very important stranger comes from outside, he may go
to the chief and ask for a building plot, and the chief may then exercise his
right of overlordship and grant the request. But this is a special and
unusual case. Village land is primarily governed by village relationships.
It is villagers who grant land to an ordinary newcomer and thereby accept
him as one of themselves. His own wishes are taken into account when-
ever possible; if he sees a piece of ground which attracts him and no one
else has a claim to it then it will be his.

[43] An old Kukwe great-commoner thus explained the granting of land
to a stranger: "First the stranger from another country comes to a
friend in this village and says that he wishes to build here, then the friend
brings him to me, the great-commoner,—or he may come directly to me
in the first place; and I go and tell the chief. Then the chief, according
to the old custom, would say 'Good! Go and cut a banana bunch for
him,' and I would cut a banana bunch from my own homestead, not from
anyone else's, and the chief would send one of his wives to me with
cooked food for our guest the stranger. This custom is now no longer
followed in our country but in the more remote chiefdoms they still cut
bananas and cook food in such cases; here the stranger now just comes
and is not given anything. And again when he wishes to begin building
we go and tell the chief, who tells us to give him a plot to build on, and
then my friends and I choose a place for him." "Does not the chief
have a say in choosing the plot?" I enquired. "No, not the chief;
does he know the details of our land-rights? He does not. It is we who
choose the place for the newcomer. But if he does not like the plot we
give him and has himself seen a place which he prefers he will ask us for it
and maybe we will give it him." "Do not people sometimes go directly
to the chief to ask for land?" "No, they always come first to us, the
commoners, not to the chief; how should a man presume to approach the
chief by himself? No, a newcomer always approaches us, and it is we
who inform the chief. I, the great-commoner, may go alone to tell the
chief or I may take the stranger with me, as I please." And a young
Kukwe chief confirmed this, with perhaps a shade more emphasis on the
part played by the chief: "The stranger goes first to the great-commoner

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and makes his request for land, then the great-commoner goes to the chief and informs him that so and so has come with a request for land, and he asks his opinion as to which piece to give the stranger. Then the chief suggests that perhaps the great-commoner knows of a suitable plot. So the chief and the great-commoner discuss it together and decide. Then the great-commoner shows the plot to the stranger."

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It is quite clear in my evidence that, though the normal custom is to consult the chief when a newcomer is given land, yet the newcomer's title is in no way invalidated if the great-commoner omits to do so at the time and simply tells the chief later after the grant has been made.

So much for the initial reception of a stranger and the grant of a building plot, the next step is the grant of garden land. But before discussing this we must emphasize the willingness with which strangers are received both by the villagers and the chief. Men are still scarcer than land in most places and the prestige and prosperity of villages and chiefdoms is increased by each addition to their membership. Strangers are always given a house to sleep in while building their own and are usually given food as well, both formally by the chief and great-commoner and informally by the neighbours. The great-commoner who told me that the formal custom of giving food had lapsed in his country belongs to the chiefdom which adjoins Rungwe mission, a small chiefdom to which very considerable immigration has taken place in the last forty years; there the relative scarcity of land is reflected in a decline of hospitality to newcomers, though none have yet been refused land. But the usual custom still is to receive them generously. "It is an ancient custom amongst us to welcome strangers, so that the chiefdom may increase and flourish."

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In giving garden-land to a newcomer the procedure differs slightly according to the value of the land in question. The great-commoner takes him out and shows him, if the land is scarce and valuable, an exactly demarcated piece, if it is cheap and plentiful, a vaguely defined area within which he can hoe where he likes. In the upland chiefdoms, for example, the best maize and bean plots are scarce; men hoe the same ground year in year out, planting maize and beans alternately in it or, sometimes, maize only with an interval of a few months fallow each year; and in this case the boundaries of each man's ground are precisely marked. But for the growing of sweet-potatoes and millet there is plenty of good land available and men hoe more or less where they please. "A stranger named Tuskelege," I was told, "came to the village of Ibungila (in Kikwe country). Amongst other things he asked for a main-garden, so they gave him the ground of a man Mwasumbi who had moved to Masoko. They told Tuskelege that he could hoe only the same extent of ground

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624 as Mwasumbi had, because there were some other maize-gardens adjoining it. The other land he asked for was not near anyone else's gardens, so he was told that he could hoe just where he liked."

Such is the custom of giving land to a newcomer, whether he comes from a different chiefdom altogether or from another village of the same chiefdom. He has no claim to any particular land but the villagers welcome him gladly and give some to him. If, however, a man returns after a period of absence to his home village then he has a claim, varying in strength in different circumstances, to enter again into possession of his old building site and gardens. But his claim is never an absolute one, it depends upon his relationship to the villagers and to the chief; they it is who decide it.

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621 Let us first consider building sites. If a man moves from his home village leaving his house standing there and another is given the site, and if he returns before the house has fallen into disrepair, before it has had to be rebuilt, then the occupier will be evicted in his favour, the villagers will always admit his claim to that site. But only, of course, if they are in general prepared to have him back in the village; if he has been expelled for witchcraft or some other serious crime he has no possible claim at all.

When men move and leave their houses behind it usually but not always implies an intention to return in a few months. If they move because of sickness and the suspicion of witchcraft men are often invited back, as we have seen, and sometimes they accept the first invitation; and then, if they and their families remain healthy, all is well. If a more protracted absence is intended from the first then the normal custom is to pull down the house and to carry the bamboos with one.

A young Kukwe great-commoner gave me from his own experience an example of the eviction of a man in occupation of another's house: "While my father was alive I fell sick and moved to Mwankenja's country leaving my house behind without taking it down. And I returned quite soon again, I was not a year away. But meanwhile, when I first moved, a stranger came and was put into my house, he was not told that I might be returning; so he went into my house—but as he was a bachelor the house was too big for him. Afterwards my friends remembered me and went to bring me back, and I came with them; and I said that as another man had been put into my house and as I was myself an owner of the soil (i.e. he was the son of an old family and so had the right to choose any unoccupied plot for himself anywhere he pleased) I would build elsewhere. But they would not hear of it and said that I must go back to my own house. So they informed the newcomer that the owner had returned and gave him another place."

$\frac{1}{2}$ This is a boast, irrelevant to the main argument.

Again if the villagers expect a man to return and if they themselves wish him to do so, then his homestead is normally kept for him. If he refuses their first formal invitation to return they may give his homestead to a newcomer meanwhile, but only provisionally; and if he does return later, whether by another formal invitation or on his own initiative, then the newcomer is moved elsewhere.

The difficulty arises when a man comes back unexpectedly to find that a newcomer has been given his site unconditionally. Perhaps the villagers are indifferent to his return and so have omitted to keep his site for him; but far more frequently it is that he has been many years away and has refused several invitations to return, and so has led the villagers to think that he is never going to come back at all. But, whatever the reason, if his site has been given unconditionally to a newcomer, who has then built his own house upon it, the villagers cannot possibly evict the newcomer in his favour; his only chance of getting the old site back lies in an indirect and tactful approach to the chief. The chief, as overlord, has the power to evict the newcomer if he chooses, but he may not choose to do so. And, if he does not, then the man will have to build elsewhere.

I was discussing these points with one of our servants whose father had recently moved from Bulindanajo, his home village in Mwaipopo's chiefdom, in Selya, to a village in the adjoining chiefdom. I asked him to explain to me his father's potential rights, if he were to return later to his home village, to enter again into possession of his old homestead.

"If a man, like my father for instance, has moved and his friends wish him to return they go to fetch him back, but if he then at first refuses to return they may put in a stranger on his homestead. But in doing so they inform the stranger that the owner of the homestead is away in such a country, that he, the stranger, is just eating the bananas meanwhile (i.e. is only in temporary possession) and that, when the owner returns, he will have to leave this place and build on another site which they will then give him for his own. In that case when my father returns, if he wishes for his old site, his friends will move the newcomer away, because they have told him beforehand, and my father will have his own old site.

"As it happens, however, when my father did actually move recently they did not put any newcomer on to his site, but Mwakyoma . . . one of his neighbours chose to build there himself. And him they do not inform of my father's rights, for he is already aware of them. If my father returns later his friends will turn Mwakyoma out telling him to go back to his own old site. For it always happens with a good homestead on which bananas do well that people covet it, and when the owner moves,

² This is a boast, irrelevant to the main argument.

³ [This footnote refers to p. 36. - Analyst]

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someone, coveting the vacant place, goes and builds there. But if it is a neighbour he knows that it is not his own and when the owner returns he relinquishes it and goes back to where he was before.

[622] "It may happen, however, that the owner of a homestead moves and lives many years away; his friends go to fetch him but he continually refuses to return, until they begin to think that he has moved finally and forever. And, in that case, they may, perhaps, put a man in there without informing him of the existence of any other owner. The newcomer builds a house and thrives. And if the previous owner then after all comes back they do not evict the newcomer; shame prevents them, for they never told him of any such possibility. Then the old owner, as it were my father for example, seeing that another is in occupation of his site goes to a different village in the same chiefdom and asks for a site. But the great-commoner to whom he goes asks him why he is approaching him— 'It is true,' my father then answers, 'that I have a place in Bulindanajo and the graves of my family and my trees are there, but another man has built upon it.' Then the great-commoner gives him a site, but he also goes to tell the chief what has happened. Then the chief, Mwaipopo, summons the men of Bulindanajo and asks them why they have driven my father away, on his return to the country, from the site that was always his. The villagers admit their mistake but explain to the chief that, as they thought my father was never going to return at all, they put in another man. So they discuss the matter; and the chief, if he so wishes, may summon the present occupier and tell him that his friends deceived him by omitting to inform him of the probable return of the owner of that site and that now, as the owner has returned, they will have to move him and give him another site; and thus the chief evicts the present holder. But such an action must come from the chief, his neighbours cannot evict the occupier, for they gave him no initial warning. So then my father would return to his own old site. But maybe in such a case my father would himself prefer to build elsewhere, he would say to his friends that, as another had built on his site, he would be content to watch over his family graves from afar and to build in a different place."

As for his old garden-land, to that too a man has a title on returning to his home village, but it is only scarce and valuable ground that he will ever trouble to claim if others are in possession. At first, when he moves from the village, his fellows, if they intend to invite him back, keep his gardens for him just as they keep his house site; but if he refuses to return at first then maybe the ground is given to others. But he can always recover it later when he does return. It is easier to get old gardens back than it is to get a house site, for no great hardship is involved for an

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evicted man. And it is even possible sometimes to make good a claim to the old gardens of one's father, even although one has never hoed them at all oneself; this is more difficult however, the claim may be refused or alternatively a compromise may be effected by dividing the land in question between the claimant and the present possessors.

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As an example of the keeping of gardens vacant for a man who is expected to return we may cite the story of Nyambo, a Kukwe, as it was told to me by a young man who lived near him. This case is of particular interest as it brings out two points to which we have not yet referred; firstly that the chief himself sometimes takes the initiative in inviting a man back, and that his doing so widens the invitation to include all the villages of the chiefdom, not only the man's old home village; and secondly that it possible to build in one village of a chiefdom and own gardens in another. This second point will be discussed again later.

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"A man named Nyambo moved because eight of his cows all died in quick succession and he thought that his neighbours, maybe, had bewitched them; but he moved without telling people of this reason. After he had spent eight months away, however, the chief sent his great-commoner to enquire of him why he had moved and left his chief wondering, and Nyambo replied that he had moved because of the death of eight of his cows all within a few days of one another, a fact which had led him to suspect that his neighbours hated him; and he would never, he told the great-commoner to inform the chief, be persuaded to return. So the great-commoner reported all this to the chief. Whereupon the chief suggested that it would be a good thing to go and fetch Nyambo back forcibly. And he, the chief, went in person with a crowd of men from Nyambo's old village and they just seized upon his furniture and drove off his cows and took them all home. But even so Nyambo refused to return and spent another two days where he was. Then they sent again to urge him to come back and at last he agreed because the chief himself had begged him to do so; he said, however, that he would prefer not to build in his old place, because his cows had died there, but rather across the river in the village of a different great-commoner. And so he did. None the less he continued to hoe his old gardens, and he still does so. They had left his gardens vacant because they had always meant to fetch him back. Now that he has returned and gone to live in another village they have given his old building site to a newcomer from Maanku, but his gardens are still his own."

The story of Kalonga, another Kukwe, exemplifies a man's right to reclaim his own old gardens. It will be noticed that the ground which he reclaimed was of particular value.

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166 out boundaries, drawing lines on the ground; he divided the land into
423 three portions, one for each. The others were strangers to the chiefdom
425 but had taken a fancy to that piece of land."

622 The sentence in this story "The chief gave the garden land of
624 Mwakajileke to other people" deserves remark for it in no way implies
any other custom than the one we have previously described. And it
illustrates the dangers of relying too much on verbal statements of
custom. When a stranger is given land by a great-commoner after
reference to the chief he is commonly said to have been given it by the
chief. The chief, from one point of view, is the overlord and the
great-commoner acts for him. But, and this is an essential qualification,
the great-commoner nearly always so acts for the chief and, save
exceptionally, it is wholly incorrect for the chief to grant land directly.
The great-commoner acts not only for the chief but also as the
representative and leader of the villagers; and in relation to them the
chief cannot exercise his rights of overlordship save occasionally and in
particular circumstances.

166 The old Kukwe great-commoner whom we have already quoted
423 explained this to me very clearly: "Occasionally one of his own men will
425 ask a chief to give him ground to hoe in another village, 'If indeed you
621 say that the land is yours!' (challenging the chief to assert his right of
622 overlordship). Then the chief agrees that all the land is most certainly
his; but still, if it is possible, he tells the man to go to the commoners of
that village and ask them for land. If the chief does not do this (but
makes a direct grant of land) we blame him for not being a true chief:
'Who is it,' we ask him, 'that has built up this country? Did you do it
all by yourself? It is we the commoners who have built it up! And
how is it, then, that you give this man land without consulting us?'"
[54] Nor is the censure of his people mere idle talk for a Nyakyusa chief, he
626 fears that they may bewitch him, that the witches among them, led by the
great-commoners of the several villages, may come in dreams at night and
cause him to sicken or to die.

166 So much for the initial grants of land to newcomers and the rights of
423 men returning to their home chiefdoms. If a man goes back, after
moving, to a chiefdom which is in no sense his home, where, that is to say,
he is not a member of an old family but in which he has himself spent
some years, he is treated as a newcomer. He is welcomed but he has no
rights to the ground, whether building-sites or gardens, which he
previously occupied.

423 Once established in a village, however, any man can hoe any uncrowned
425 ground within its borders and thereby make it his own. A newcomer for

423 are used for house building, while the *nyungati* produces a fruit (*indilola*)
824 which is both delicious to eat and also full of seeds which are dried and
crushed for ointment (*ijembu*). Of the two trees the bamboo is the more
valuable.

423 Now among the Kukwe and Selya groups rights in these trees are
425 somewhat similar to rights in the valuable crater plots. When a man
● 621 moves, his bamboo and *nyungati* trees, unlike his bananas, do not revert
to the villagers; normally they continue to belong to his nearest kinsman
in that chiefdom, who cuts and uses the bamboos and picks the fruits of
the *nyungati* trees. If the villagers give the site to another man then the
newcomer has no rights over these trees unless the kinsman himself gives
them to him. But it sometimes happens that, where only *nyungati* trees
and not bamboos are involved, the kinsfolk do not bother to exercise their
rights; then the trees are treated like bananas, picked by the neighbours
until a newcomer is given that plot, and then by him.

423 If however, among the Selya and Kukwe groups, a man moves
425 leaving no kinsfolk near at hand, then the chief (*umafyale*) as the supreme
622 overlord has a right to his trees, and if they are near the chief's own place
this right is exercised; he cuts and uses the bamboos and his wives pick
the *nyungati* trees. If another man is given the land by the villagers to
build on then he goes and asks the chief to allow him some of the *nyungati*
trees, and his request is usually granted, the chief gives him two or three
of the trees, keeping two or three for himself. But the bamboos, being
more valuable, are usually kept altogether by the chief. If, however, the
ownerless trees are at a distance from the chief's place then he normally
does not trouble to claim the *nyungati* trees but only the bamboos. The
former are at first picked by the neighbours and later given by the villagers
to a newcomer together with the site. And, even with the bamboos, if
they are a long way from the chief's place a "good chief," they say, will
allow the newcomer to cut some of them without payment; but it is
wholly within the chief's power to keep them all for himself if he wishes,
and "bad chiefs" do so. Furthermore a chief does occasionally also
exercise his right to claim an ownerless *nyungati* tree at a distance. If
one of his wives comes and complains to him that she has no *nyungati* tree
of her own, then he takes her to a site from which someone has recently
moved leaving ownerless trees behind and there he gives her one of the
trees; the rest he leaves as usual to the villagers and so to the newcomer.

423 Bamboos are men's property and only a man can claim them but
621 *nyungati* trees can be claimed by a kinswoman, a sister or a daughter, of
the old owner if none of his near kinsmen have troubled to do so.

423 We must here take note of a most significant modern development.
178 In the old days rights in trees could only be exercised by members of the

same chiefdom in which the trees were growing; for between chiefdoms an actual or potential state of war always existed, and a man coming from a hostile group to claim property would have been driven away violently. But to-day under European rule it is now customary for a man to cut his own bamboos, if he is living in a neighbouring chiefdom, instead of leaving them to his resident kinsfolk. The group within which property can be held is gradually widening.

Such is the custom among the Kukwe and Selya groups; their rights in bamboos and *gyaguti* trees are not normally lost when a man moves provided there are kinsfolk left nearby to exercise them. The one exception to this rule is in the case of expulsion for witchcraft or other serious crime. Then even if the man expelled has left kinsfolk behind him, still the chief takes his trees.

Among the Nyakyusa proper, on the other hand, the *gyaguti* trees are treated like bananas. When a man moves he loses all rights in them and, unless the chief steps in to take them, as he always may, they are granted by the great-commoner, together with the soil, to the newcomer who is put on that site. Bamboos, as in Selya and Kukwe country, continue to belong to the kinsman of the man who has moved.³

Trees introduced by the Europeans, of which coffee trees are the most valuable, have been declared by the Federation of Chiefs to be the property of the planter, even although he has moved to a different chiefdom. This law was made after much anxious discussion between the chiefs, the Administration and the Agricultural Department and is, of course, subject to revision if it is found after trial to be impracticable. In the case of coffee it has inevitably been modified in practice since coffee must be tended continuously if it is to remain free from pests and to bear fruit, and any man who actually looks after coffee trees has a generally admitted claim to the crop unless he is paid by the planter for his labour. The planter, however, in surrendering the trees to him may compel him to pay something for their initial value.

Further, as the Agricultural Officer has the right to uproot any untended coffee trees and must exercise it if pests are to be kept under control, the practice has grown up of his taking over any large number of abandoned trees and keeping them clean with labour paid by the Native Treasury; the trees are subsequently sold to some other man and the proceeds paid into the Native Treasury again. If, however, a planter of coffee trees makes arrangements, when he moves, for the cleaning of his coffee then the trees remain his own.

³ Some informants deny this and insist that they always pass to the chief. I was not myself long in Mungonde among the Nyakyusa proper and I lack conclusive evidence on the point.

low to all his classificatory brothers. The normal routine of life is constantly interrupted by women's avoidance of these men, they crouch and hide and make wide detours to avoid them, a man comes into a room and a woman runs out hastily, a father cannot enter his son's house while his son's wives are cooking there, ceremonies are duplicated to avoid bringing them in contact. Few people seem to realize the meaning of this taboo, but occasionally a man is found who tells a story which makes its function abundantly clear. It is said that an old chief, long ago before the taboo was instituted, fell in love with his son's wife and took her, and such was the horror of everyone at what he had done that this taboo was instituted. This story expresses the necessity, in a society where the old men are accustomed to take the young women as wives, of guarding in some way against the possibility of a father desiring his own son's wife for himself; more particularly perhaps because the cows for his marriage have come from him.

This taboo, separating father and daughter-in-law is one of the reasons for the age-village system which we must next discuss. For in Nyakyusa society father and son live in different villages.

Age-Villages

The most characteristic relationships of the Nyakyusa people are those which centre in the age-village. Villages and age-groups are common enough in other societies, and are familiar to all of us, but it is rare to find them combined; it is very uncommon to find, as we do among the Nyakyusa, that local groups of contemporaries live together for most or all of their lives.

Age-villages are formed by groups of men, all roughly of the same age, their wives and young children. Women belong to the villages of their husbands, young children to those of their fathers. The number of households in an age-village varies, but thirty is probably a fair average. Girls, as we have seen, live at home until they marry, which they normally do soon after puberty, and then each goes to the house and joins the village of her husband. But boys, who marry later in life, leave home at about the age of ten or eleven and set up villages of their own.

(a) Herd-Boys

Between the ages of about six and eleven the boys sleep at their fathers' houses and herd their fathers' cattle. This is a full-time if not a very arduous occupation; the cattle are driven out about an hour after sunrise and return to be milked about 1 p.m.; after an hour they are again driven out and do not come back until nearly sunset. The cattle of eight

As the boys one by one reach the age of ten or eleven, two important changes usually take place in their lives. Firstly they leave the herding of cows to their younger brothers, and themselves begin the business of hoeing the fields which will occupy them until they die; and secondly they no longer sleep in the houses of their fathers but join an age-village of boys. These two changes usually, but not always, take place at the same time and normally at about the age of ten or eleven years, well before puberty. But there are cases where special circumstances put the age of one or both of these changes later; I know one boy who herds his father's cattle although he has reached puberty, because he has no younger brother old enough to take over, and there are only five or six boys in his herd-group altogether. And in general I am told it is not uncommon for some boys who have reached puberty to be found still herding cattle. Again in one age-village the boys have home a little later than usual because there are leopards about and it is dangerous for small boys to walk from the village of their fathers to that of the boys after dark.

(4) *The Boys' Village*

When a fair number of the sons of a village of married men have reached the right age, their fathers give them a piece of land to one side of the parent village on which to build. There they build little huts of mud for themselves, sufficiently well-constructed to keep out the heavy rain, and there they sleep. The building of the huts on this land begins, in a playful manner, before the boys move. While they are still herding the cows and sleeping at home they build miniature huts there in their spare time, but do not sleep in them. When they move they build slightly more substantial huts with a better thatch. Until he marries each boy has his father's fields in his father's village and can feed himself by his own mother at his father's house. But he sleeps with his friends. Thus between the time when he leaves home and his marriage each is a member of two villages, economically he still belongs to that of his father, socially to that of his own contemporaries. Though bachelors eat at their parents' houses, it is very rarely that they do not eat in the company of their own friends. A bachelor does not simply go home to eat but a group of bachelors, friends of the same boys'-village, go round together eating at the house of each one's mother in turn.

In an age-village of married men there are always several different herds of cattle; and it is not only those from the same group of herd-boys that set up a new village together, but all the sons of the age-village. When a boy leaves the herd-group he joins a larger community, including the friends of his own age who have herded cows with him, but many

- (21) where as well. Any boys' village is found to consist primarily of the
 (54) sons of the members of some older village who originally gave the land
 for its building, but as we shall see later sons of other villages live there
 too.

- (21) At the beginning, when a group of boys starts a new age-village, or
 (362) when boys join one already formed, they do not all have a hut to them-
 selves, two or three friends share a hut. But later, as they grow older,
 each builds for himself. The younger ones build their huts of reeds,
 but the older ones try to get a few bamboo from their fathers or senior
 relatives and build more solid houses. Married men build entirely of
 bamboo, but often in a boys' village you will find a compromise between
 bamboo and reed, both being used in the same house; and the houses of
 bachelors, even though they be all of bamboo, are smaller than those of
 married men. The technique of good building is not very difficult, and
 the older boys instruct and help their juniors, as they join the village, to
 improve the skill playfully acquired as hand-boys so as to build more
 substantial huts.

- 245 The chief food of the Nyakyusa is the banana; men plant bananas
 (212) immediately round their huts, though their fields are mostly at a distance.
 And bachelors, while they continue to eat their main meals at their
 parents' village, plant bananas round their own huts as well. Bananas
 begin to bear very quickly, sometimes within a year of planting, and as
 soon after the establishment of a boys' village, its members have bananas
 of their own, which they cook for themselves and eat with their friends at
 odd times during the day. But they have as yet no fields.

- 846 There is no formal initiation of boys at puberty; but, on the other
 (381) hand, the custom of leaving home and joining a boys' village is directly
 (577) connected by the Nyakyusa with their ideas of decency in sexual life.
 They think it is perfectly all right to discuss sex openly among friends of
 about the same age but altogether wrong to discuss it either in the presence
 of, or with, their parents or those of their parents' generation. If a boy
 learns about sex-making, in any way, from his parents the Nyakyusa
 think that he will not respect them properly and that he himself will be a
 fool. A boy must learn these things from his immediate seniors and
 friends. One man said to me: "If a boy after about ten years old
 stays at home to sleep, he is laughed at by his friends and his own parents
 send him away. They say: 'If he sleeps at home he will hear what his
 parents talk about at night, the night is always full of loud talk; and he
 may even see them undressing. He will grow up a fool, with little
 wisdom.' You are at the boys' village" he went on to say, "the older

boys tell all sorts of stories, especially about women, they discuss love-making and women, and tell tales of their own conquests. The youngest ones listen to these things and that is all right in the boys' village, that is how we learn. But we compare in our minds and think that if a boy stays at home it is as if he listened to all this from his parents, and people always do talk loudly at night; and that is very bad, that is foolishness.—But in the boys' village it is good for the young ones to listen, that is how children grow up."

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On another occasion when I told this same man that in Europe many people thought it a good thing for boys to get sexual instruction from their parents and teachers he was shocked: "But I think it is impossible" he protested "for parents to go into detail with their children; there is too much shame on both sides. And if they did, it would damage the children's respect for them."

There is thus a correlation in this society between the age-village system at its grounds and the belief that a boy's sexual interest in sex must be informed, not by his parents, but by friends only a little older than himself.

Few men marry before twenty-five years of age, but affairs with girls begin before puberty. All affairs are related in detail to friends in the age-village, and the younger ones learn by listening; and they also learn when the older boys send them as messengers to the girls of their fancy.

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Besides the more serious love affairs which are carried on in secret, groups of boys from the same age-village commonly flirt with any girls they meet on the way, and it is then that the incantations are learnt. If one of the boys is known to be related to one of the girls, either through a common grandfather or great-grandfather, his companions send him away: "Don't you see your sister is here? You cannot come!"

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Contrary to a general belief about "primitive" societies, homosexual intercourse is common in the boys' villages, between close friends, but there is no real perversion; homosexuality is said to be always *faute de mieux*. The older men in discussion discuss it with the tolerant word "abstinence," it is never mentioned after marriage, and all except the badly-minded get married sooner or later.

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But life in a boys' village also gives its members much information and wisdom unconnected with sex. There, as we have seen, boys perfect their skill in building, and there also they learn to argue and express themselves with adult fluency. It is characteristic of the Nyakyusa legal

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- 621 system that small cases between neighbours are always first discussed and
868 often finally settled in the presence of some friend or friends who act as
867 arbitrators, without recourse to the constituted political authorities. Small disputes about petty theft, the possession of a cloth or some coppers, the ownership of a banana stem and so on, are as frequent in the boys' village as elsewhere, and as elsewhere the people concerned often argue it out to a finish before some friend or neighbour. And by listening to such disputes, or participating in them either as judge or principal, the boys acquire rhetorical skill and some knowledge of law. In some boys' villages there is a recognized leader appointed by the political authorities of the chiefdom to settle graver disputes, in others there is not. The position of such a leader, where there is one, will be discussed later.

- 577 Above all the boys' village gives to its members the conversation and
621 company of more of their own contemporaries than did the group of herd boys, and company the Nyakyusa hold to be the greatest of educators. In the most explicit discourse I heard on the value of company my informant explained that cleanliness, together with rhetorical and conversational skill, were all learned in company. These are his exact words: "We say that it is by conversing with our friends that we gain wisdom: it is bad to sit quite silent always in men's company. A man who does this seems to us a fool, he learns no wisdom, he has only his own thoughts. And a man who does not spend time with other people is always dirty, he does not compare himself with any friend. We say that we learn cleanliness of body in company, the dirty ones learn from their more cleanly friends. Again if a man is accused to the chief and is unable to defend himself easily and with eloquence we mock at him and say: 'What is the matter with you? Do you live all by yourself? How is it that you are so foolish?' We think that wisdom and cleanliness are the two great things learnt in company. We think it is bad to live alone far from other people, such a man learns nothing: he never learns to express himself well, to converse pleasantly with friends. It is better to live with other people."

- 621 At first the sons of the parent village continue to join the boys'
541 village as they grow up; but after some years, when the senior members of the boys' village are about seventeen or eighteen years old, the younger ones begin to be refused admittance to the village: "they are children." The young ones then either begin a new age-village of their own, or else join a village which has already been started by the sons of a nearby men's village a little junior to that of their own fathers. If you enquire who are the members of such and such a boys' village you are always told that they are the sons of a particular village of men, but detailed investigations

tion reveals the presence of some sons of other men's villages as well. Brothers, half-brothers and other relatives are sometimes members of the same village, but more often not; and if they do belong to the same village that is because they are near each other in age, and were born in the same village, not because they are kinsmen.

The members of the boys' village, which is now closed and no longer increases in numbers, continue to grow older, and after a time they begin to get married. Getting married, as we have seen, is often a gradual process; but it is not until he has his wife permanently with him that a young man can have fields of his own and eat their produce at his own place. The cultivation of land requires the co-operation of man and woman, cooking on any elaborate scale is a woman's business.

As the members of a boys' village marry the village does not move but it expands. The houses are built ever bigger and farther apart and the adjacent land is brought under cultivation. The boys' village with which I am best acquainted is in this transitional stage; it has fifty-three members altogether, the majority of whom are single, but some few are married, cultivate their own fields with their wives and eat food cooked by their wives in their own houses. Of those who are single some again are betrothed to girls who visit them from time to time, but each still cultivates his father's fields, and eats at his father's home.

(c) *The Men's Village*

It is now necessary to understand the system of men's villages and the general political organization in which the boys' villages finally take their place.

The number of age-villages in one division, all the members of which are married, varies with different circumstances, but the usual number is from six to twelve. The age system is only broken by moving or by death; when a man dies his heir usually comes and lives where the dead man was living in his age-village. Then he inherits the wives, the huts, the cows and the land of his predecessor, he inherits the dead man's position in the village and often takes his personal name as well. The heir may be many years younger than his new neighbours but he is now treated as their contemporary, he sits with them at council, he shares their rights at any division of meat. The age system in the villages is also broken by moving, for a stranger may come and be granted land in a village even though he is considerably older or younger than the bulk of its members. But otherwise members of a village are roughly contemporaries.

621 In a village of married men each has one or more banana huts for himself and his wives, with bananas round them; his homestead is close to those of his neighbours, while the main garden-lands of the whole group are at a distance all together. Boundaries between age-villages are not always apparent to a stranger, a solid hundred acres or so of banana and banana may turn out to consist of two or three villages, each with its own organisation, and each having a block of garden-lands separate from the others.

622 In each village of married men, and usually in the older boys' villages as well, there is an appointed leader or great commander (*diŋŋema*) who is originally chosen for the position by the great commanders of the senior age-villages of that chiefdom. They try to select a man who is wealthy, who comes from a respected family, who has personal ability in judging cases, who is popular with his followers, and in the old days they looked also for qualities of courage and the ability to lead men in war. I think, though my evidence for this is as yet only circumstantial, that they also require certain believed spiritual qualities in a man, the power to recognise and to counteract aggressive witchcraft.¹⁰ The qualities which the selectors look for in choosing a new great commander are the close to his functions. He is usually extremely hospitable to his neighbours, he judges their cases, he is their leader in communion and in the old days he led them in war also. He represents their desires to the chief and it is through him and in consultation with him that the chief gives orders. Finally each great commander is believed to protect his own villagers from aggressive witchcraft, to shield people and cattle from the spiritual forces of evil.

So important is this position of great commander that legal precautions are taken "to prevent the great commander becoming a chief" as several informants have put it to me. It is illegal to choose a great commander among the members of a chief, it is illegal to elect the son of a great commander to that office in any age-village of his own contemporaries, though he may perhaps inherit the position in his father's village when his father dies.

623 The relationships which arise from common membership of an age-village are continually apparent in the Nyakyusa culture. Communion and feasts are not only meeting places for relations but also for the age-villages; the great commander in consultation with members of his village grants land and grazing rights to strangers who ask for them; and

¹⁰ It is possible that this power is believed to be inherited by magic alone, I am not sure.

he settles many legal disputes between his neighbours. The village is both for men and women, the chief field of friendship, conversation and mutual hospitality; and its members recognize greater obligations towards one another than they do towards those outside. Before the coming of the Europeans the age-village was also a military unit, led by its own great commander, in the constant fights between chiefdoms.

In most villages there are several herds of cattle which feed separately. The herd boys, as we have seen, thus form separate groups within the village, as also do their flocks; the boys are related in the common activity of herding, the men, owners of the herd, by their joint interest in it and their common fear of witchcraft.

In the relationships of villages the belief in witchcraft is a constantly recurring factor. It is believed that certain people, both men and women have the power of harming their neighbours and their neighbours' cattle without taking any overt action whatever, without reciting any spells or performing any magical ritual at all.

Their influence, which is exercised at night in dreams, is only fully visible to those who are themselves endowed with this power; and to it is commonly attributed both sickness in men and the failure of cows to give milk. In this belief the elements of actual ill will and quarrelling, of actual sickness and the failure of cows to give milk and of actual dream experiences are combined in a significant whole. Witches are of two kinds, they say, those who use their power rightly (*one me go*) and those who use it wrongly (*malak*). The first kind are said generally to spend their dreams in trying to protect the others from harming those whom they love. The good witches are the "defenders of the village," and in each village the great commander is believed to be one of these worthy ones. In each group of men whose cows are herded together there is, again, commonly one man who has the reputation of defender of the herd, who is believed to protect the cows from the witchcraft of disgruntled individuals whether members of that small group or not. But if, at any time, a single person earns a general unpopularity in the village, whether by his pride, his meanness or by wrongdoing, then it is believed that the defenders themselves lead the spiritual attack against him, and he falls sick. Such a time of unpopularity acting through the power of witchcraft is called the "breath of men" (*malaka me wambi*); and the belief in its efficacy is one of the chief sources of the unpopularity of the social order of Nyakya life.¹⁰

¹⁰ E. Gifford Wilson "An African Village," *Africa* Jan. 1935.

4 COMMUNAL RITUALS OF THE NYAKYUSA

661 The age system of the Nyakyusa has been described in detail in
 621 *God Country*,¹ but, since it forms the basis of their social structure,
 a brief explanation must here be given for the benefit of readers
 unacquainted with that earlier volume. Within each *chidion*
 there are a number of villages composed not of kinsmen but of
 657 age-mates. Villages begin when small boys of eight or ten years
 build together at a little distance from their fathers. They are
 joined by younger brothers, as these reach the age when boys stop
 sleeping at home, until the eldest are in their middle teens, when
 687 the youngsters will be told to begin another village. The boys of
 a village have their own leader, a 'natural' leader, not specifically
 appointed, but they are subject to the headman of their fathers'
 village, and formerly fought as a group under his direction. But
 722 at the 'coming out' a headman for each village is selected from
 among its members by the fathers: if he dies, his heir—a younger
 brother or son—inherits his position, so that sometimes a young
 man becomes headman of an old man's village, taking the same
 and social position of his father. Only commoners are eligible as
 headman: we knew one candidate who was rejected because his
 great-grandfather was a chief.

Two villages in each *chidion* are senior to the others and their
 747 headmen are responsible each for half of the country. During the
 'coming out' ritual the chief marries two wives, 'mothers of the
 country', and one is established in each senior village or capital
 (*chitungale*). The eldest sons of these two wives are the heirs,
 and later divide the old chief's country between them. Most of
 the chief's junior wives are divided between the capitals but some
 may be settled in a colonizing village in unoccupied country. All
 the chief's sons build with commoners in villages appropriate to
 their age, and all even the two heirs are subject to the commoner
 headmen of their villages. There are *senior* and *junior* commoners
 782 'sons of the chief', and those of strong personality gain a following
 and settle disputes between their fellows (as may any commoner),
 but only the two senior sons can claim political authority.

821 Before the 'coming out' the villages of young men and their
 821 fathers adjain, for the boys have built on their fathers' land, on
 the fringes of their fathers' villages. But at the 'coming out' there
 847 is a new deal in land. The young men are established in the centre
 857 of the country and their fathers move to the periphery; it is not
 merely that fathers and sons exchange land, but all the boundaries

¹ Monica Wilson, *God Country*, 1959.

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or redrawn and only the fields in old craters (the most prized and fertile of all) are not re-allotted. Thus the villages of kinamen of two generations adjoin, and often those of three generations.

On the old chief's death his village headmen become priests of the grove in which he is buried, and, in co-operation with his sons, the new chiefs, sacrifice there on behalf of the two countries into which his old chiefdom is divided. There is a nice balance of power between chief and village headmen in life, and when he dies his two heirs and the headmen (or their heirs) continue to share power, the power which belief in his spiritual force and their ability to guide it gives them. The success or failure of rituals is held largely to depend upon the personal relationships of the leading participants, chiefs and commoner priests.

Besides the ordinary commoner priests (the village headmen of past generation or their heirs) there are priests of the chief's lineage, usually belonging to a junior line to which specific ritual functions, such as rain-making, have been entrusted, and whose office is hereditary in the same way as that of a chief. Kasitile (56),¹ the rain-maker, is such a priest: his grandfather was the father of a ruling chief (43) and had been appointed as rain-maker (*ampelefa*) and priest (*ayaga*), the two functions being separate but overlapping. As rain-maker Kasitile tended the rain stones, as priest he initiated the rituals in certain of the sacred groves, though he did not actually officiate himself. Kasitile was a key informant on ritual and a chapter is devoted to his history, and it epitomizes the relationships between chiefs and commoners.

As we have shown, most of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde chiefs join some sort of kinship with one another. Those who are nearly related pray together at the groves of their common ancestors, and those more distantly connected join in sacrifice to their founding fathers, but in the communal rituals kinship is neither the dominant theme nor the exclusive principle of association, as it is in the rituals celebrated by private persons. In the communal rituals most of the priests are commoners unrelated to the dead who are honoured, and the sacrifices are held to benefit not only the descendants of the dead, but all those who live in the countries they once ruled. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the communal rituals constantly recalls that of the rituals of kinship; themes which pervade the death ritual recur again in the rituals of 'coming out' and 'cleansing the country'. This background is

¹ Kasitile after a name refers to the genealogy of Nyakyusa chiefs being p. 9.

173 The balance between chiefs and commoners is explicit. So
 773 also is their dependence on *bat* cultivation and herding, and it
 [643] should be noted that, though the Nyakyusa speak of themselves
 [533] as stock men, they are not pastoralists to the same extent as
 the Masai or the Nuer. The number of cattle in Rungwe District
 today is less than half the human population, and men tradition-
 ally have done the heaviest share of cultivation.

773 In every version of the myth the tension between father and
 573 son, or older and younger brother, is stressed. In Nyakyusa
 561 society the father (or his eldest son who replaces him) controls
 773 the family property and exacts obedience from his juniors who
 [764] continue to show their respect after his death by sacrifices. The
 tale of Kyala and Lwembe celebrates the triumph of the junior.
 Thus, at the heart of the very ritual which sanctifies seniority
 there is the assertion of the victory of the son and younger brother.
 The myth expresses the aspirations of subordinates—of com-
 moners and junior kinsmen—as well as the power of chiefs and
 seniors.

173 As we have already noted, the heroic cycle makes no reference
 773 to the peculiar Nyakyusa institution of age-villages. Their charter
 561 is a quite separate myth¹ which tells of a chief who looked on his
 621 daughter-in-law and loved her and took her, and this so shocked
 606 men that in future fathers and sons built separately, so that a
 father-in-law should never see his daughter-in-law.

There are other hints of the eternal theme. Besides the saga of
 173 Lwembe there is another quite different tale of the origin of fire,
 773 which is less often related. In it a girl who had angered her father
 372 by breaking his drinking calabash fled from BuKinga to the
 Nyakyusa valley, where she found people who ate their food raw.
 She made fire and cooked for them and 'all women came to
 her to learn to cook'. The long-necked calabash, used as a drinking
 [415] vessel and in prayer to the shades, is a man's most personal
 [764] possession destroyed at his death, and it stands for a husband,
 while cooking is a symbol of the sexual activity of women, so the
 myth is perhaps a drama of incest, but we have no direct evidence
 of this.

173 This last is the only tale in which a woman appears as a
 773 benefactor. In general, the mythology is that of a strongly
 561 patrilineal society in which men are dominant. The wives of
 Lwembe who walked behind their lord, shepherded by a lion,

¹ cf. Mission Wilson, *Good Gossip*, p. 85.

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agra, they sometimes build in villages of different generations. When it comes to the selection of village headmen, however, care is taken to ensure that they are indeed sons of men who came out with the previous chief, and a village like Katumba which comprised both younger brothers and sons of Mwankuga's generation breaks up, some members 'coming out' with Mwankuga's son, others acting as 'fathers'. Within a village all the members are equal subject to their headman, but a hierarchy of villages is clear.

The pre-eminence of the two senior village headmen of a chief is marked. They alone make fire with him at the 'coming out'. They alone are handed war tails with which to lead their men in battle. Each is responsible for one half of the country and a dispute not settled by the headman of the village of the defendant is reported to the senior headman in whose side of the country the village lies, and he brings it before the chief. Each senior headman has his own village, the two senior villages of the country, in which the royal ladies live; the senior wife married at the 'coming out' is established close to the senior village headman, the second wife close to the second senior headman. A chief may establish wives in a number of villages, and some at least of those he inherits from his father continue to live in his father's old homestead 'to sweep the graves', but his capitals (*ifitegasile*) are the two senior villages of the country in which his two senior wives and two senior village headmen live¹ and the names of the capitals are used not only for the senior villages but for the half sections of the generation they lead. The importance of the two senior headmen is apparent even when their generation has handed over political authority to their sons. At the sacrifices we have described Njabakwa and Ngulyo, heirs of the senior headmen of the chief Mwankuga (82) officiated, and at the 'coming out' of Mwanyithu (177) it was Mwambuputa and Kakuja his father's senior headmen who organised the ritual.

Each village established at a 'coming out' is a clearly defined unit with its own land, and leader, and name, but villages are also segments of larger units, the half-section of the chiefdom under a senior headman, and the whole chiefdom under the leadership of

¹ Mwanyithu (177), though he had two senior headmen, established his two senior wives in one house, close to the house of Kibalele his most senior headman. This was explained as a temporary measure 'because they were young', but it is not the traditional pattern, and may be linked with the fact that the splitting of the country each generation is no longer accepted as the inevitable pattern.

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the chief himself. The members of each village co-operate in some measure in cultivation and herding and they form a defensive group against attack 'by day and by night'—i.e. against armed raiders and witches.¹ But there is no great elaboration of ritual for single villages. Such village rituals as occur are connected with defence against witchcraft and involve driving out a supposed witch, or receiving back a member who has fled from fear of witchcraft, or protecting the village fields against witches.² Most communal rituals are organized on the basis of the chiefdom or group of chiefdoms, and villages or sections participate as segments of the chiefdom.

The principle of generation and that of section hold one another in check. All those who have 'come out' together have a strong sense of unity as opposed to the generations of their fathers and sons, but every generation is split into two sections each led by an heir of the chief, and these sections have a certain territorial solidarity. It is common in Africa for organized age-groups to cut across kinship and territorial groups. The Nyakyusa peculiarity lies in the territorial unity of age-sets which occupy villages, and the manner in which the simiparous tendencies within a chiefdom have a constitutional outlet in the rivalry between the sections of a ruling generation which become independent at the 'coming out' of the next generation.

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The combination of the hereditary and selective principles of leadership among the Nyakyusa is also somewhat different from that among their neighbours. With many Central African people the heir to the holder of the office of village headman or chief is *selected*, and the most capable member of a given lineage or lineage segment appointed.³ Among the Nyakyusa succession is *strictly* defined and there is no selection of a suitable heir except to the *supreme and greatly feared* office of 'divine king', but the *selective* principle is given full scope in the 'catching' of leaders for the young men's villages at every 'coming out'. It is this combination of the hereditary and selective principles which binds together chiefs and commoners and successive generations. The rules of

¹ Monica Wilson, *God's Country*, pp. 22-23, 31-32.

² *op. cit.*, pp. 32-4, 34-5, 132-3, 134-5.

³ E. Combs, 'Witchcraft and Ritual of Lunda Villages', *Africa*, *xxx* (1950), p. 11; M. G. Sherriff, 'The Social Context of Great Witch Killing', *Africa*, *xiii* (1943), pp. 269-71; V. Tauxem, 'Ntindia Village Rituals', *Africa*, *xxx* (1950), pp. 103-4; J. C. Mitchell, *The Five Villages, Mankwato* (1950), pp. 137-43.

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inheritance ensure that a limited number of young men are absorbed into the senior generation and live with the older men, sharing their activities and from time to time holding office as headmen or priests of that generation, and the selection in each generation of young men who are not the sons of village headmen, or chiefs, or headmen of the past generation, ensures that commoners without office are constantly recruited to the hierarchy of rulers. In short, power is distributed.

(c) RITUAL AND SECULAR BONDS

As in so many societies, economic and ritual links extended, traditionally, further than political links.¹ Selya was dependent upon BuKings for iron and the Kings came to fruitful Selya to pray for fertility. The priests who came to pray brought the bees. The many independent chiefdoms of Selya and the Mbaka valley acknowledged the spiritual overlordship of the Luembe by sending sacrifices to him, and it was through the network of hereditary priests like Kasile, Mwamakunda, Mwalukuta, and Nyama of Selya, and the Kings priests Kikungubeja, Nyanyigwa, Kyamba Kitali, and Silobwike that wider bonds were maintained. Mwaisopo (116) when he was granted a Court which gave him the secular leadership of Selya, failed to make any acknowledgement of Luembe's traditional power, and it was Kasile who later urged him to do so. The western chiefdoms of the Nyakyusa still buy medicines and bark-cloth from the Ndali to the west, and have done so for many generations, but no common ritual links them as it does Selya and the plain with BuKings. The trade was of lesser importance than that to the east, for it does not seem to have included iron, though the Nyika who share a common culture with the Lamba, the western neighbours of the Nyakyusa, are known to have been skilled smiths.² With the Sango to the

¹ cf. E. Colson, 'The Flaming Torque of Northern Shikoku' in *Ann. Phil. of British Central Africa* (ed. Colson and Clouston).

² A comparison with the frontier in West and South Africa where economic and religious organisation compelled the neutralisation of Government is instructive. Cf. G. E. Marwick, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. 2, part 2, pp. 210 ff.

³ D. East-Cross, 'Geographical Notes on the Country between the Lakes Nyasa, Bangweulu, and Tanganyika', *The British Geographical Magazine*, 21 (1897), p. 285. Clouston's suggestion that some of the Northern iron comes from the west is discounted by Clouston. J. F. Elliot, *The Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa* (1898), p. 270 and map, ed. J. Thompson, *The Central African Lakes and Bush*, vol. 1, p. 270.

NOTE

621 It should be realized that (i) the names of the two senior villages of a
631 generation are well known and clear cut, but those of subordinate
561 villages are more fluid. Furthermore a village often has subdivisions,
[103] distinguished by its members by name, but known to outsiders only by
[72] the general village name. (ii) A village may acquire a new name at the
'coming out'; the senior village of Mwanyilu's generation used to be
called 'Mbuguso' but 'came out' as 'Lupando'. (iii) Some villages die
out altogether, e.g. Kyemo II. (iv) Some villages straddle generations.
Katela in 1955 is in the same sort of position as Katumba in 1935. It
includes eight sons of Mpunga who belong to generation III, but also
fourteen sons of men of Masoko who 'came out' with Mwanyilu. In
the case of Katumba the members who were sons of men of generation
III moved to younger villages and 'came out' with Mwanyilu, among
them being his senior headman Kilasile, a man of over forty. But
Kilasile's contemporaries who were sons of men of generation II could
not 'come out' with Mwanyilu, at least not as a group—and the
members of Katumba attended the 'coming out' as 'fathers'. Boys
join a village of contemporaries but may move later to a village of
younger men who are of their own structural generation.

At the 'coming out' of Mwanyilu and Mwabungulu five village
headmen were 'caught' and secluded with their chiefs. They repre-
sented five clear-cut villages. Kilasile and Sikambombo, Mwanyilu's
two senior headmen who made fire are leaders of Lupando and Iringa
respectively; Pauliki and Batungulu their juniors are leaders of
[622] Bajisi (or Ipoma) and Mfumbi (or Isuba), and Mwanjotile the single
headman of the junior heir, Mwabungulu, has his own village of
Nkuyu established on newly settled land in the forest. The young men
of Kibonde were included under Kilasile's authority, and those of
Kinuli and Kabula under Sikambombo's. The names Lupando and
Iringa are well known as those of sections of Mwanyilu's chiefdom, but
the names Bajisi and Mfumbi are not: the young men of these villages
still use the names of their fathers' villages, Ipoma and Isuba, though
there is a clear territorial separation between fathers and sons. Taxes
[651] are collected under the names of Igembe, Ipoma, Kibonde, Njisi,
Isuba, Kinuli, and the three forest villages, Kilusi, Kibola, and Nkuyu.

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PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

elder watches over the morals of his flock and it is his duty to report to the Session any breaches of Church law among his people. Through him the cards entitling members to attend communion are distributed, and cards are withheld from those whom the Session has agreed must be suspended from membership. Each man has, on the average, 125 people to care for. The women elders organize the women's weekly meetings, and take parties of women on preaching tours in pagan villages. They are the leaders in any charitable activities of the congregation and in the instruction of a Christian girl at her marriage. A woman elder settles disputes between two women, and in family quarrels she is often asked by the elder in charge of the village to help him to reconcile the couple. She is also a supervisor of morals and reports to the local elder if she 'hears any woman speaking like a pagan'. Deacons are elected like elders and are primarily responsible for the collection of Church dues and the administration of Church funds, but in a village in which there is no elder a deacon will carry out some of his duties.

In practice, then, each local group—a Christian village or village section—has its chosen leader, a male elder or deacon who conducts daily prayers in the local school house or his own home, and also fulfils many of the functions of an assistant village headman, arbitrating in disputes and acting as the spokesman of his village section. The traditional organization of the age-villages, in which an individual had some choice as to the village he should join, and was not bound by kinship connexions, makes an adaptation to villages in which those of the same faith live together easy. It is noticeable that the Pentecostal and Watch Tower converts build their own village sections apart from Moravians or Lutherans. And since the traditional village leaders are chosen, not hereditary, it is very easy for a leading Christian to become an assistant headman, more or less formally recognised by the village headman named at the 'coming out'.

At first the teachers were more directly under the supervision of the missionary than of the congregation, being selected by him and paid by the mission, but in the middle thirties, when funds from Germany ceased coming to the Moravian and Lutheran missions, the payment of village school teachers fell on the congregations of these denominations. Each village wanting a school had to provide a building, and in this pagans and Christians often co-operated, for many pagans also wanted their children to

MEMBERSHIP OF VILLAGES

(a) *Laponda* (Senior village of Generation IV)

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551

Member	Village of father	Village of father-in-law	Excess in village
1. Mwanyika (177)	Igonbe	Bujaga Ichi Iringa Igonbe	Half-brother Half-sister married to headman Father's half-brother Married half-sister of chief
2. Kilasile (headman)	Kinoli Father's heir in Kibondo	Igonbe Heir in forest village	Married half-sister of chief
3. Mwangundeli Mwakipapa	Igonbe	Mwanguna's (C 28) children	Half-brother of chief
4. Mwanhambe	Bujaga. Moved to Kibondo	Another children	None traced
5. Mwanhambele	Bujaga	Bujaga Moved to Ndala	Married daughter of chief's father's half-brother
6. Mwachalaga	Igonbe	Igonbe	None traced
7. Mwampura	Kinyoro	Igonbe	None traced
8. Muka	Ipoma	Ipoma	None traced
9. Mwachipulle	Ipoma	Igonbe	None traced
10. Mwachilona	Kinyoro	Igonbe	None traced
11. Mwachipokera	Another children	Mwanguna's children (C 27)	None traced
12. Mwachipulle	Another children	Ipoma	None traced
13. Mwachilelele	Mwanguna's children (C 28)	Mwanguna's children (C 28) Kabule	None traced
14. Mwachipulle	Igonbe	Laponda	None traced
15. Mwachipulele	Ipoma	Mwachipule's children (C 29)	None traced
16. Mwachilele	Kibondo	Laponda	None traced
17. Mwachipule	Another children	Another children	None traced
18. Mwamala	Ichi	Igonbe Kinyoro	None traced
19. Kinyoro Mwachipule	Bujaga	Kachela	Half-brother of chief's father
20. Mwampura	Kinyoro	Igonbe	None traced

In one of twenty members, there are nine women, and two are married to members of this clan. The remaining eleven members are not connected by kinship ties.

MEMBERSHIP OF VILLAGES

225

(B) Katende (Generation III)

Members	Village of father	Village of father-in-law	Flames in village	Flames elsewhere	
1. Gwendoline	Klayero		Elder brother of 1	Son in Nida. Elder brother in another children (C 17)	621 613 62 557
2. Angelle	Klayero	Not married	Younger brother of 1		
3. Syapawingi	Klayero	Lugombo Kawambala's children (C 1)		Brother in forest village. Brother in chiefdom (C 1). Brother in plain. (All at first built in Kawambala).	
4. Kileke	Bujaga	(a) Bujaga (b) Klayero	Half-brother of 3	Elder brother Igumbo, moved to C 18. Brother in Christian village Kawambala (at first built in Kawambala). Brother in Mlaya at work. Brother in Iki (not away at work).	
5. Nkaka	Bujaga		Half-brother of 4		
6. Mawam	Bujaga	(a) Klayero (b) Mwangoma's country (C 18) (c) Kibanda	Half-brother of 7	No full brothers. 2 half-brothers moved to other children, another to Zanibar. Daughter married Kibanda, another married Nida.	
7. Nana	Bujaga	not married	Half-brother of 8		
8. Nathan	Bujaga	Kibanda moved to Igumbo		His only son of mother, 2 half-brothers in Nida.	
9. Patrick	Another children (C 17)	Nkapan		Father's younger brother's son brother of Ikinga.	
10. Mwalindi					

In out of ten members, there are one pair of brothers and two pairs of half-brothers, but all have close kinships (brothers, half-brothers, or father's brother's sons) in other villages or children. Kawambala has diminished from fifty-four members in 1934 to ten in 1955. Many members have died and many have moved, some to the forest colony, some to the plain to plant rice, four to Lugumbi.

226 COMMUNAL RITUALS OF THE NYAKYUSA

621 613 162 551 (4) Katsi (Generation IV and V)

Age (some married)	Father	Father's village
Ashele } full brother	Mwacha (194)	Myungu
Alpai }		
Jwina }		
Mwaka }		
Pruda } half brother	Mwacha (194)	Myungu
Tukafu }		
Lundi }		
Kimwaka }		
Alumbwaka }	Ngwaka	Mwaka
Ashele }	Prudi	Mwaka
Lalaga }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Ngwaka }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Ngwaka }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Kafu }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Kawaka }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Alupa }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Bajiro }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Ashele }	Mwaka	Mwaka (identified in Lupanga)
Kajiro }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Fyia }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Mwaka }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Ndaga }	Mwaka	Mwaka
Ngwaka }	Mwaka	Mwaka

i.e. out of twenty-three members, two are full brothers and six others are half brothers. No other kinship connections were traced.

COMMONER PRIESTS MENTIONED

77: 55: 1 Kwaka Kwaka Kiri Ngwaka Ngwaka	} Secondary Kings priests who come to Lalaga and visit Katsi on the way
Kwaka Ngwaka Ngwaka	} Secondary priests of Lalaga
Mwaka	Katsi's senior priest
Mwaka Ngwaka	} Secondary priests of Lalaga, the guru of Mwaka (94)
Kwaka Ngwaka Ngwaka	} Village headmen of Mwaka (94) and priests of the guru
Mwaka Katsi	} Village headmen of Mwaka (94) and priests responsible for 'seeing out' of Mwaka (94)

For example,

121 In the Northern Highlands there is now a strong tendency for the tight village system to disintegrate as men seek to site their houses, each in his own coffee plot. In the Lake Plains also the structure of the age-village is changing - there the village persists as such but they come to be inhabited by men of any age and new villages do not emerge with a new chief. No attempt is made here, however, to analyse these variations for they are only now beginning and no satisfactory, detailed information is available for the post-war rural economy of the highland areas.

121 The Government of Tanganyika has permitted the publication of this essay, and I wish to express my gratitude for its support. The essay is a modified version of my original Report which was presented to Government in January, 1956. The views expressed in it are my own and not those of Government. As usual in my work as Government Sociologist, I have received much valuable encouragement, advice and information from officers stationed in the area. The Nyakhyusa themselves, on during my first enquiry, were usually cooperative, and at least some of them welcomed my work as a contribution to the solution of their social difficulties. It would not have been surprising had they remained aloof and antagonistic towards my enquiry about their land, for like many modern Africans they have a sense of insecurity which is not amenable to reason. In fact I was able without much difficulty to make my enquiry I wished, to examine sample areas and to discuss the situation in all its aspects. Perhaps it is that an African people welcome a sympathetic enquirer and in their problems genuinely want assistance. The task of a sociologist is of course in some ways rather easier than that of an administrator or national officer who has to persuade the people actually to accept and practice new ways and to abandon old ways. It is hoped that this essay may be of assistance both to these officers and to the people whom they are attempting to assist and teach.

121 Finally, I must thank the East African Institute of Social Research which has accepted this essay for publication, and especially Dr. L. A. Fallers who kindly read and criticised the original draft and who drew the two sketch maps.

131 Area: The area, the "Lake Plains", as used in this essay is to be understood to cover the major part of the southern local government area under the Mbulu Rural Council. Included are the small groups of Kisi (Kisumu) and Ntali (Ngazi) peoples to the extreme east and west respectively. This area contains the official Rural places surrounding the northern tip of Lake Nyasa, and the lowest foothills to the north where the country begins its easy incline towards the Poroto Mountains. To the south lies the lake and to the south-west, beyond the considerable Songwe river, lie the foothills of the northern part of the Usambara Mountains. To the east are the towering Livingstone Mountains and to the north lie the other Nyakhyusa groups in the Highlands.

The area comprises a fairly compact social and economic region with a common historical tradition. Several of the indigenous chiefdoms stretch across the intermediate boundary between Rural places and foothills. With few exceptions the present chiefs are local descendants, in their various houses, of the original West Nyakhyusa who led the people into this lowland area five generations ago. The smaller chiefdoms are pre-eminently the West Nyakhyusa groups.

CHAPTER II

THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM

Although this essay is to be primarily concerned with the endures and changing land and population situation among the Nyakyusa of the Lake Plains, it is quite essential first to have an understanding of the traditional system of political and territorial organization and of land tenure. This is not more historical, for despite changes the traditional system remains as the basis of contemporary land-holding and land law. While actual conditions on the ground change, the Nyakyusa appreciation of those changes and their attitudes to land lag significantly behind. In brief, the traditional system was geared to a situation where there was plenty of land. Today the people find real difficulty in adjusting themselves to a high density of population and an acute shortage of land, with the result that this new situation is aggravated by outmoded practices, attitudes and cultural values. 121

The ancestors of the present group of peoples now known collectively as the Nyakyusa, moved into the Rangwe region from the Ukinga Highlands to the east beyond the peaks of the Livingstonia Mountains. According to legend, which is probably substantially true, these newcomers found a sparsely populated country which they easily occupied. Later, following intermarriage with one group under a man called Mwakyusa left the Manika area in the centre of present-day Rangwe District and moved down into the Lake Plains. There, probably less than 150 years ago, they drove out the Ngande people and settled. The sons of Mwakyusa took their shares of the country and people and established their independent chiefdoms. The chiefs in 1958 are the lineal descendants, mainly in the fifth generation, of Mwakyusa, and have a well-known genealogy. The only exception to this occurs amongst the group of tiny chiefdoms in the extreme east under the Livingstonians, which now form a single administrative chiefdom under Mwakyusa and number some 420 men. They trace descent from pre-Nyakyusa settlers known as the Saka. 173

Traditionally, as today, the village was the basic unit both in social life generally and in land-holding in particular. The Nyakyusa village was possibly unique in Africa. It was comprised of men of roughly the same age, together with their wives and young children, and it excluded their fathers and sons and also, very often, their older and younger brothers. Each village consisted of a close group of houses (often around on a broad "village street"), with arable and pastoral land around it. Each village had fairly well-defined boundaries with its neighbours. The village was represented as a group and acted corporately through its headman. *Mfumu* (father) was the guardian of villagers' land rights, the arbiter in land problems and disputes, and the controller of owned land. He was also the political and ritual leader of the village, but essentially he was a commoner chosen from amongst the villagers themselves, and was not a member of a chiefly lineage. 321

Land was owned by the village as a group. Every man resident in the village had a clear right to a site for his house and barnyard plot and to arable land within the village boundaries; he also had a right to graze his cattle in its communal pasture. Resident men gave these rights and members of other villages were excluded. A man who left the village automatically gave up these rights, though if he returned he was able to take up his former building or its equivalent. 423

Age-villages continued to form a chieftain under the hereditary chief, and, but active co-operation between villages thus numbered was also slight; indeed in the larger chieftains there commonly existed intense animosity which might break out in raiding or even civil war. The cohesion of these larger chieftains was weak - for example, when the Hyakum was attacked by large and Nigami war-parties, and later by the Germans, villages of the same chieftain completely failed to join in common defense. Similarly the head affairs of one village were no concern of any other, and each jealously guarded its own rights.

State of the churches was large; conditions of work is typical of Mexican political organizations and social attitudes. In 1951 the southern indigenous church had only 36 men. In 1948 15,700 people were listed amongst about 18 indigenous churches, but undoubtedly had lost the Colonial Government from the system there would have been rather more - at least five more. Today there are 12 recognized "administrative clergy", amongst whom five have each less than 2,000 people under them, and the largest churches contain fewer than 10,000 people - the average is just over 4,000 people.

Nevertheless the children, the collection of villages, was important, because in the creation of the children villages were created, and in its development the villages developed, matured and died away. A village survived only so long as its members lived and by the nature of the organization there was but little possibility of the recruitment of new members, for villagers' sons left to form their own new villages. They were permanently eager to perpetuate the name of the new children.

In connection with the construction of a *Thupkron* village and with land issues, the significant feature of the situation was its multifunctionality, together with the induction of a new class, as the great "winning-over" ceremony, *shu-shu*. In brief, each chief was succeeded by two of his sons - the eldest son of each of the senior became the chief, i.e., of his first two sons. At the "winning-over" ceremony, when the sons were still young men and their father was not a particularly old man, the old chieftain was divided into two, each part coming under one of the new young chiefs. Before this critical moment - at which such important ritual was performed - the younger son of the old chieftain had already moved away from their father's village and had established their own independent village nearby, each one containing a group of houses. A *Thupkron* boy from the age of eleven or even younger could see children in the wild, his father and mother, but, in company with his equals, built his own hut as a clear defiance to the main village as indicated by the father's headman. Until the "winning-over" ceremony these younger villages came under the control of the old village headman, but with the induction of the new chiefs they achieved independent status, each with its own headman appointed from among its members by the old headman. Each new village was allocated a new building site and a new arable area, and quite commonly the old village, the elder son, secured some a little in order to give the younger son adequate access to the land. In a way considered that the younger son's needs for land were met.

After this wholesale reorganization of the old churches, when new villages were established and new communities designated, the old churches, however, the old traditions and the other ones (the "others") gradually retired from active public life. The old church was supposed to remain outside after a time (or was quietly killed off) in order to leave the field clear for the new; the old traditions became the religious and ritual traditions of the new churches, with the leaving of other communities, and the old ones

villages grew ever smaller and became extinct as their members gradually died off in old age.

A Nyakyaan village, then, stood in being in the most significant political, social and religious sense. Each village had its own approximately democratic, and each headman was elected and eagerly recognized in order to lead and protect his men and their families.

This particular system appeared satisfactorily in the demographic and land-use conditions of the old days. By the process of bifurcation, briefly described above, new chiefdoms and new villages were formed for each generation. Although the population appears to have been increasing rapidly there was always sufficient land to create new chiefdoms when one had ceased before, and to create new villages and more villages than had existed before in the old chiefdom. The two new chiefs were often eager to move apart and find sufficient and more than sufficient land for their needs.

The system of bifurcation, the ideal of the Nyakyaan, did not always work out as easily in practice - at any rate it often did not in the Lake Plains. Sometimes it did work; for example, the present chiefdoms of Larama and Karama are the two parts of their grandfather's single chiefdom, which split up under their respective fathers. Similarly, the present Wapokopale and Wapokopale chiefdoms stemmed from a single unit, while the Wapokopale chiefdom itself today is really two indigenous chiefdoms, but the Government would recognize only the senior brother's claim to chiefship and allowed him authority over the whole. Even where a single new chiefdom succeeded the old (frequently as the result of civil war in which one brother outgrew the other) the essential bifurcational arrangement persisted so that the resultant single unit had two distinct halves, each with its own land with its villages and headmen. In any case, whether traditional bifurcation occurred or not, and right down to modern times, new villages have been established at the time of the "moving-out" of the new chief. The basic village system showed greater persistence and remained true to type that did the chiefdom and the wider political system.

The real authority of a Nyakyaan chief was not in general very great, although individuals here and there achieved personal importance. A chief was accorded a great deal of prestige and honor, and by tribute and gifts to frequently become pre-eminently wealthy. He was supposed to be kept informed by his headmen of all important village affairs and to approve all matters concerning the land, but the village headman was in fact the real local authority, who attended to the details of land allocation and land use within his village. A chief could not do this, and in fact only in so far as he had the support and loyalty of his headmen had he any authority at all. "A chief is a chief because he has headmen," one informant put it to me - "to use a prominent chief himself, a village said: 'A chief does not rule the chiefdom, or the land. We, the people together, use it.' A chief could, without action or advice, take any unoccupied land for the use of himself or of his headmen, but he could not allocate it to others; both headmen and villagers would have indignantly and successfully protested had he tried, as never consciously did. Land disputes, as unimportant matters in a society where land was plentiful, were settled by the headmen of the village in question; they were the private affairs of the village and the chief had no right of interference. Some village disputes first came before a meeting of the headmen concerned, with perhaps the assistance of the senior headmen of the chiefdom. Only if a dispute could not be settled and if it seemed likely to threaten general peace within the chiefdom would the disputants go before the chief himself, who even so ruled and led as they himself in his headmen to secure a settlement. He defined was his position that he might be unable to resolve inter-village disputes for fear of withdrawal requests against him by the unsuccessful party.

land economically connected to the common pool. An established village might decide to use part of it perhaps, but not before gradually gaining the approval of the landless, but the strongest return here and across time of usefulness and national security. If the landless agreed, as he would after a time in most cases, the newly acquired plot became part of the village's holding with an owner a title on the land. Each vacant land could also be allocated by the landless to a newcomer or, before the new village was established, to the son of a village.

If a man had more land than he could cultivate - because, for example, his wife had left him to cultivate in their own village, or his wife had died - he was under no moral obligation to give up any part. The landless might, if the land owner, try to persuade him to release a portion in order to make it available to someone in need; but the land holder could refuse and the landless had to accept his refusal. As a chief depended on the support of his landless, or did a landless's position ultimately depend upon as much the general support of his village, from whom cattle he was chosen.

As the new "settling-out" economy the son of a village of the old situation might be required to move aside in order to allow the young men, their sons, to take up the better building site and farming land. This they traditionally did voluntarily and they built new homesteads on one side and cleared new arable plots. Once established in the manner, these older men would not be disturbed again and they remained secure in their new holdings. Since often in fact such a displacement took place I cannot say, but it certainly seems to have occurred sometimes, for one can still trace old village sites which appear to have been the common Nyangasa story.

In all this it must be remembered that the spirit of village unity and continuity was held in the higher esteem than land in such a fertile country where land was plentiful and subsistence farming required but small-scale holdings. Security of tenure and defined rights to particular plots are notions belonging to a different situation and age, when land began to be scarce and to have an economic value, and when there is danger of men not being able to obtain as much as they need roughly where they need it.

Homesteads were invariably welcomed to a village: they were supplied with a house site and an arable building and were covered with land until the first harvest. They were an addition to the numerical size and physical strength of the village, and they increased a landless's prestige. Their rights were no less sacred than those of family members of the village, although their social position was less secure, at least at first, for they had not shared in the history of the community and had not grown up with the use of village associations and responsibilities amounting almost to kinship.

Traditional rights in some way to be mentioned briefly. There were inherited without difficulty along with the land on which they stood, and a father or son could commonly inherit the deceased's valuable ten without bothering to take the village head around. If a man left his village and then returned to his land there, the position was different. Success came only with the land and a new successor simply took flesh over. Successors out of the group unless as they grew so readily and abundantly. Successors are more valuable (being used increasingly in house-building) and are left behind in this way could be claimed in the first instance not by the village but by the chief. If the chief favored them they became his property, or he could grant them to any man he favored. Usually a chief was content to leave them. Then the local freedom of the departed man had first claim, and if they had to use the land, or if no kinship even existed in the village, they became village property to be allocated by the landless. If anyone came' were suggested in

* There are, of course, many other factors in the situation of the village from the economic point of view.

A23

the same way as bananas, to be allocated along with the vacant surrounding land, although sometimes it seems that a chief might successfully lay claim to them. Trees supplying firewood were generally plentiful in the surrounding bushland. A man would not cut wood on another's holding, and standing trees rarely went with the land if it was taken up by anyone else, in the same way as small stands of standing grass did.

In connection of this customary account the following points may be mentioned as important to the understanding of the traditional system:—

(i) Land was plentiful in relation to the people's needs and extensive areas were left unoccupied.

(ii) Land was owned by the village as a group, acting under its own headman, who was the arbiter and the allocator of fields.

• [5]

(iii) Land was held in usufructuary right only by a resident member of the village, and every resident had the right to a house and banana-grove site, to sufficient arable land and to the use of communal pasture and woodland.

(iv) The individual's security of tenure was good, in so far as this was thought as all important.

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(v) The power of the chief was slight in land matters; he had no authority to allocate land.

(vi) Other villages, whether of the same chiefdom or not, had no claim in, or authority over, a village's land and land affairs.

TABLE V
DISTRICTS IN TANGANYIKA WHERE LAND DISPUTES ARE COMMON

		No. of land cases	% of total land cases	Estimated population density	Population per land case
1953					
Bukoba District		1,129	23	69	230
Lushoto Division		149	11	186	142
Moshi District		347	23	277	146
Pwani District		81	29	113	1,341

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423
171

The Changing Village

The possibly unique age-village of the Nyakyusa is now undergoing considerable and fairly rapid change in response to the new conditions of land shortage. There is, firstly, an increasing sense of village exclusiveness and, secondly, there has been a breakdown in the essential age-basis of its organisation. That is to say, that whilst the corporate unity of the village as an independent group has been strengthened, yet the social foundation of the village has simultaneously been changed and a different sort of village is emerging. It would take us far beyond the scope of this present essay if a full analysis of the changing village were to be made, nevertheless it is clear as these changes are more or less directly the consequences of modern land shortage, land tenure and economic conditions some amount is essential. Since the age-village was fundamental in the life and social organisation of these people, the new emerging village is of crucial importance.

Land shortage has definitely exaggerated the unity and exclusiveness of the village in the Lake Plains at a time when, for other reasons, it was beginning to become a more open group. There was always, as we have seen, insistence on the principle that only a member of the village could hold and use village land; but village boundaries were often poorly marked and it was difficult to determine which headman, if any, had genuine jurisdiction over land relatively distant from the established village site. Nor was it particularly important to be able to do so whilst land was plentiful. As paddy cultivation spread, men began seeking extra fields farther and farther away from home as land nearby was all taken up; and so long as they did not attempt to take land in the immediate vicinity of another village site there was seldom much difficulty in this. The attitudes born of a sufficiency of land persisted and headmen were not disposed to protest against outsiders who sought fields near the limits of their vaguely defined areas. Inter-village warfare and raiding had, of course, been abolished as an expression of and a weapon in inter-village rivalry and animosities. With the establishment of general peace and security, and with increasing movement about the country between villages, and chiefdoms, such rivalries and animosities began to die away. Many men came to live in the villages which they themselves had not helped to found; their coevals from their fathers' villages lived elsewhere, many of them widely scattered, and it was not possible to maintain a high degree of village patriotism, and, people began to feel, it was not especially necessary or important any longer.

It began to be possible for a man to hold some of his arable land within the area of another village, so long as members of the second village were not deprived of the opportunity of their own agricultural expansion should they desire it. This was especially the case when a large area of hitherto vacant (i.e. bush) but now valuable paddy land was contained within the approximate boundaries of a village. Outsiders were allowed to acquire fields on the strength of kinship with the headman or with one of the established villagers, or even by giving some small present to the headman (e.g. a little beer or some meat, etc.). Land was still plentiful then, or so it seemed to the Nyakyusa, and future shortages and difficulties were not perceived.

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[23]

[24]

[25]

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land as his. Young men associate with one another, with their older brothers and with their fathers for education of land left vacant. We also saw, however, that often in the larger families not all the sons are able to get a share of the parental holding, or at least not a share of productive size. These younger sons are forced to resort to trying to obtain vacant land elsewhere - possibly within the same village, but as often as not outside. Finally, the young man on his new holding may feel his neighbors to be of any age; certainly they will not have been members of his own original parental family.

The way for this changing concept of village life and the new sort of village was prepared in the years before land shortage became important. The changed political system has been briefly noted already, but no less important was the great increase in inter-village movement in earlier European days when peace and personal security had been established. During this period Wilson (1934, page 32) remarked that perhaps 85 per cent. of Nyakya shifted at least once from the place where they first obtained land. This estimate, while perhaps holding good for Highland Nyakya movement when Wilson exactly worked, was too high for the people of the Lake Plains, where about 45 per cent. is more correct according to my geographical and village surveys. That is still a relatively high degree of mobility for a mainly sedentary, peasant society such as it was in those years. It is clear that the pseudo-permanent bond of security could not permit so a wide dispersal of village life and consciousness, what is fact as every one full of the members of a village were not original central founders but had come in from elsewhere. Before the land shortage, movement did not entail the shifting of young men to other young men's villages, or of older men to other older men's villages. It was, at best essentially, promiscuous movement, ignoring age categories. The complications of land shortage now, in retrospect, only to have followed existing lines of village development and to have begun the completion of the process.

In the Lake Plains, therefore, the village persists as a clear, territorial, land-owning group and as a specific cluster of households and huts, usually with a village crest, the whole closely bounded in by continuous forest grown. Beyond this is the waste land, usually land-owning fields, mostly and partly fields further off. In persistently promoting what it already built, the village has gained a new consciousness, for the security of the individual land-holder is maintained by the corporate ownership of the village and by excluding outsiders as far as possible. On the other hand, it is no longer an age-village either in fact or intention, and it cannot be, for age-villages were confined only with an expanding territorial system and a sedentary economy.

This brief analysis of Nyakya village organization is merely close applies only to the Lake Plains. In some parts of both the Central Region and the Northern Highlands the age-houses of Nyakya villages had more probably already been seriously weakened in pre-European times. On the other hand, elsewhere, and particularly in the more conservative parts less affected by modern trade and the cash economy, the traditional age-village still exists in something like its old form.

Land shortage has appeared in the Highlands together with a developing cash economy, but the basis of agricultural and economic change lies mainly in coffee cultivation which, of course, requires relatively smaller fields than does paddy in the Lake Plains, but it needs more care and attention from the grower for moderate success. As far as I could see in the course of

1. Changes in the land through the older and more established age, and therefore a certain degree of security must be shown.
2. According to the survey conducted in Western Uganda, Westland and other central districts, and also the conditions of all village areas.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Before to summarize the contemporary land situation in the Lake Plains it may be said that in the main the traditional land tenure system and land use still continue on the basis of native land holding values. The essential factor in recent years has been the acute land shortage in relation to needs under the current system of agriculture. Village unity and village self-sufficiency have been increased and as also has the authority of the village headman in his control and allocation of land rights. Security of tenure has been accomplished, if anything, and one of the most important methods of obtaining land is now by inheritance. The new law abolishing inheritance from father to son, while generally acceptable to the people, is producing a number of civil suits which form the greatest proportion of the most important land cases before the local courts.

The shortage of land is principally the result of increased demands for paddy (i.e. cash or export) cultivation, although the population appears to be decreasing slowly. In the high density regions almost all men have considerably less land than they could cultivate, especially under the regimen of the co-ops, with the developing desire for surplus income. In the low density region of the low fertility there is still some vacant or partly utilized land, though of very inferior quality for paddy cultivation. The shortage hits the younger men hardest, and many of them cannot obtain land at all until the death or disability of their fathers. Fragmentation and dispersion of holdings is rapidly becoming serious and without check.

The first question which arises is whether anything can be done to ease the pressure of population on the country by making more land available or by making the distribution more equitable.

The densely populated parts of the northern region of the Lake Plains offer a unique situation only, for the country is raised above the level of the flood plains and is often broken and hilly. Fertility is low, irrigation is a constant danger and the paddy yield (if obtainable at all) is poor. Many men from the densely populated areas go south and men are therefore not unwilling to move there. In any case the available land, which remains empty and economically open to cultivation, is filling up fairly quickly - mainly by immigration. Certainly I do not think that it is nearly sufficient space to meet modern needs. There is, however, no reason why immigrants should make a difficult situation worse, and therefore it is suggested that further immigration from outside the Lake Plains should be carefully controlled if not altogether prevented. Indiscriminate settlement (almost entirely Myakyan from the Highlands) who hold land without permanent residence should be prohibited and their holdings restricted to local subsistence.

As I have already indicated (page 17), I do not think that the problem of men who hold unusually large holdings is particularly serious. Such large holdings are relatively few and will be eventually split up by inheritance on the death of the present occupier.

In the flood plains proper there is, as far as I am aware, extremely little new land which could be brought under cultivation. What small additions to the clearance of dense and thicket and to drainage schemes would produce

1. These areas of dense and thicket are limited to the low density area. If drainage could be made for a few small areas.

